# A NEW APPROACH TO POETRY

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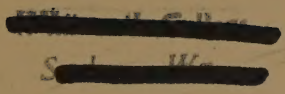
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, CHICAGO

THE BAKER & TAYLOR CO., NEW YORK; THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED, TORONTO; THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, LONDON; THE MARUZEN-KABUSHIKI-KAISHA, TOKYO, OSAKA, KYOTO, FUKUOKA, SENDAI; THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LIMITED, SHANGHAI

# A NEW APPROACH TO POETRY

*By* ELSA CHAPIN *and* RUSSELL THOMAS

*And as imagination bodies forth*
*The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*
*Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing*
*A local habitation and a name.*



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COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A.

TO

*E. M. P.*

WHO IS A FRIEND TO THE ARDORS
AND ADVENTURES OF PEDAGOGY

# PREFACE

Alfred North Whitehead, in his recent book, *Science and the Modern World*, has pointed out the basic difficulty of modern education. In his last chapter, "Requisites for Social Progress," he says that specialized knowledge and the professionalism that must inevitably develop to convey its discoveries to men leave the modern world "with no expansion of wisdom and with greater need of it." He goes on, "My own criticism of our traditional educational methods is that they are far too much occupied with intellectual analysis . . . . We neglect to strengthen habits of concrete appreciation of the individual facts in their full interplay of emergent values, and . . . . merely emphasize abstract formulations which ignore this aspect of the interplay of diverse values. . . . . The general training should aim at eliciting our concrete apprehensions, and should satisfy the itch of youth to be doing something. There should be some analysis even here, but only just enough to illustrate the ways of thinking in diverse spheres. In the Garden of Eden Adam saw the animals before he named them: in the traditional system, children named the animals before they saw them."[1] The last sentence calls to mind someone's remark about pedantic scholarship: "There is *Heaven*, and there are *lectures about Heaven*. The pedants read the lectures."

This volume tries to show that there *is* Heaven—a Heaven of poetry, at least. There can be no better explanation of the need for such a book at such a time than

[1] Whitehead, *op. cit.* (1926), pp. 284–85.

Mr. Whitehead's analysis of the fundamental lack in modern education. Nor can there be any clearer statement of the aims of the authors of this book than his suggestion for "eliciting concrete apprehensions" and satisfying "the itch of youth to be doing something."

It is this focus on the "individual facts in their full interplay of emergent values"—in other words, a focus on poetry for its own sake—which seems to warrant the rather pretentious title, *A New Approach to Poetry*. Good teachers have always been shocked at the failure of students to grasp the meanings of words on the page before them. If one is reading poetry, it is sufficiently obvious, perhaps, that a failure to know the text is disastrous. Our *New Approach* is, in reality, an approach as old as that moment when the first hearer thrilled to the first reconstruction, in words, of a familiar and understandable experience. "Oh, I *know* how he felt!" says your student, with a rush of sympathy which means a forgetting of himself in a larger conception of the inner life of another human being.

There was a time when the teacher told the class "how the poet felt." Often the telling was based on a misreading of the text, an overstressing of current moralities, a sentimentalization grossly unfair to the artist. The *New Approach* tries to sweep all this untrue interpretation aside. It attempts to give the students the principles which one looks for in the art of poetry and to illustrate the infinite charm and variety of their manifestations. It hopes to show that every poem—every *real* poem—is a creation in itself, following no "rules" but worthy of the closest and most sympathetic study of its essential "poetic" nature.

It is in this close and sympathetic study that we try to

"satisfy the itch of youth to be doing something." Anyone who has tried out adaptations of Professor Rickert's methods for the analysis of style knows the amusing avidity with which boys and girls set to work with colored crayons and schemes of charts, definitely to prove the existence in a poem of the pattern of the rhyme, use of color imagery, proportion of characteristic sound-qualities, or some other exquisite device which has caught their attention and which they wish to explore more intimately. The result of their exploration is not only a feeling for technique as the vehicle of the poet's emotional expression but an entering into the poet's very creative sources—the secret of his power.

We do not guide them, we teachers. We put tools in their hands and give them freedom. "When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being. Physical wandering is still important, but greater still is the power of man's spiritual adventures—adventures of thought, adventures of passionate feeling, adventures of aesthetic experience."[1] The instant response from students which teachers have met who feel deeply the truth of these words of Whitehead's, and who have tried to live loyally by them in the classroom is the justification of our book.

The present form of the material, unsatisfactory as it is to those of us who have been developing it, has grown from a careful application in classroom practice lasting through two years, of the principles of Professor Edith Rickert's book, *New Methods for the Study of Literature*. It is the result of untiring patience and helpfulness on her part. It had been hoped that she would be able to read

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

the proofs, but her absence in Europe made it impossible to wait for her suggestions before the pages were made up. The book is appearing, therefore, without her assistance in the final revisions.

We have had the co-operation of many teachers and students interested in developing Professor Rickert's principles. Among these, we wish to acknowledge particularly the help of Mrs. James Hillhouse, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Mr. Henry Boettcher, Chicago, Illinois; Miss Ruth Weeks, St. Joseph, Missouri; Miss Florence White, San Antonio, Texas; Mr. E. J. Miller, Easton, Pennsylvania; Mr. E. M. Rowe, Provo City, Utah; Mr. Edward Wagenknecht, University of Washington, Seattle; and Mr. Lisle Rose, Houghton, Michigan. But no acknowledgment would be complete without mention of the class of thirty young men and women of the University of Chicago who, in the Autumn Quarter of 1928, lent their enthusiastic support to various experiments which have been invaluable in testing the validity of certain statements. Specific recognition of their help occurs at appropriate places in the text.

E. C.
R. T.

Chicago, Illinois
December 31, 1928

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge, with thanks, the courteous permission of the following publishers to use copyrighted materials.

Brandt and Brandt, agents, for "Exiled," from *Second April*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay, published by Harper and Brothers (copyright, 1921), and for "When the Year Grows Old" from *Renascence and Other Poems*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay, published by Harper and Brothers (copyright, 1917).

Dodd, Mead and Company, for selections from *Admirals All*, by Henry Newbolt; the *Collected Poems of Francis Thompson;* the *Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke; Emblems of Love*, by Lascelles Abercrombie.

Doubleday, Doran and Company, for selections from *Kensington Gardens*, by Humbert Wolfe.

Duffield and Company, for selection from the *Collected Poems of William Sharp.*

Henry Holt and Company, for selections from *Mountain Interval*, *New Hampshire*, and *Selected Poems*, by Robert Frost; and from *Cornhuskers* and *Chicago Poems*, by Carl Sandburg.

Houghton, Mifflin Company, for selections from *Pictures of the Floating World*, by Amy Lowell; and from *Irradiations*, by John Gould Fletcher.

Alfred A. Knopf, Incorporated, for selections from *Nets To Catch the Wind*, by Elinor Wylie; from *Poems*, by T. S. Eliot; from *In American*, by John V. A. Weaver; and from *Profiles from China*, by Eunice Tietjens.

The Macmillan Company, for selections from *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy;* from *Later Poems*, by William Butler Yeats; from *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Gibson;* from *Salt Water Poems and Ballads*, by John Masefield; and from *The Collected Poems of James Stephens.*

James B. Pinker and Sons, for selections from *The Collected Poems of Walter De la Mare*, published by Henry Holt and Company, and from *The Pier Glass*, by Robert Graves.

Horace Liveright, for selections from *The Collected Poems of "H. D."*

Charles Scribner's Sons, for selections from *The Children of the Night* and *The Town Down the River*, by Edwin Arlington Robinson; and from *The Poems of Alice Meynell.*

Martin Secker, Limited, for a selection from *The Collected Poems of James Elroy Flecker.*

Frederick A. Stokes Company, for a selection from *Poems by a Little Girl*, by Hilda Conkling.

The Viking Press, for a selection from *Boy in the Wind*, by George Dillon.

*The Saturday Review of Literature*, for a poem by Vachel Lindsay.

The authors also acknowledge gratefully the permissions of the following authors for selections used from their works: Robert Bridges, A. E. Housman, Charlotte Mew, Harold Monro, and Mary Austin.

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# PART I

# HOW POETRY COMES INTO BEING

# CHAPTER I

## RE-CREATING A REALITY: THE IMAGE

Lascelles Abercrombie gives an entertaining account of how human beings can reconstruct out of words some fact or other which has been once upon a time an actual happening. He quotes a song translated from the Australian blackfellow:

> The Kangaroo ran very fast,
> But I ran faster.
> The Kangaroo was very fat:
> I ate him.
> Kangaroo! Kangaroo!

"A legitimate triumph," comments Mr. Abercrombie. ". . . . the blackfellow did well to celebrate it. But in the mere fact of celebrating it in a song, what has happened? Kangaroo-hunting has become an affair of the ideal world. . . . . [He] has not idealized kangaroos at all; he has idealized the experience of hunting them—simply by making permanent the sense of its success. Thereby he has created a world which is altogether *his own:* he has made it *belong* to him and to his desires. He is the master: he has but to sing his song, and he will know it. What is much more important, any one at all can possess himself of the poet's delighted mastery of things, simply by singing the poet's song."[1]

The blackfellow knew the fun of calling into his mind and into the minds of his cronies the remembrance of the

[1] *Theory of Poetry* (1926), pp. 24 ff.

delicious fat kangaroo. Keats, the most friendly of men, did exactly the same thing for Charles Dilke, when he wrote to him: "Talking of Pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my Mouth a Nectarine—good God how fine. It went down soft, pulpy, slushy, oozy—all its delicious embonpoint melted down my throat like a large beatified Strawberry."[1]

Notice that the blackfellow has done more than taste the kangaroo. He has first seen him in the chase, even closely enough to observe his rotund figure. We can follow the blackfellow's vision explicitly, although our sense of taste cannot build up from his song any exact re-creation of the excellence of kangaroo flesh. Keats, however, has let Dilke in on an actual experience. In just the same way, each of the five senses may be a source of the keenest joy of recollection.

> Guard the sailors tossing
> On the deep blue sea . . . .

quotes De la Mare from Mr. Nahum, and adds, "They are plain and common words, but . . . . the effect they had on me, and still have, is different from the effect of any other words on the same subject. Though, too, like Mr. Nahum, I have now seen something of the world (have been seasick and nearly drowned) I have never forgotten those imaginary sailors, or that imaginary sea; can still hear the waves lapping against that (unmentioned) ship's thin wooden walls, as if I myself were sleeping there, down below."[2] And De la Mare continues to explain how this

[1] *Letters* (Colvin, ed.; 1925), p. 324.

[2] *Come Hither* (1923), pp. xxxiii, xxxiv.

matter of images is, for the most part, the first and simplest attraction to poetry. "So what I then read has remained a clear and single remembrance, as if I myself had seen it in a world made different, or in a kind of vision or dream. And I think Mr. Nahum had chosen such poems in Volume I as carried away the imagination like that; either into the past, or into another mind, or into the all-but-forgotten; at times as if into another world.

Of course poets never limit—or hardly ever—their delight in sense appeals to only one of the five, as Keats isolated the taste of the nectarine for Dilke. Rupert Brooke's lines from "The Great Lover" illustrate this:

. . . . . .

These I have loved:
White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;
Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss
Of blankets; grainy wood; live hair that is
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
The good smell of old clothes; and other such—
The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
About dead leaves and last year's ferns. . . . .

Sight, taste, smell, touch—all are here; where is sound? As if the poet himself suddenly felt the lack, he supplies the fifth sense appeal:

Sweet water's dimpling laugh from tap or spring;
Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing:
Voices in laughter, too; and body's pain,
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train . . . .

—Brooke, "The Great Lover," *Collected Poems*

Now it is very interesting, indeed, to study a little more closely just how these images, so attractive because of their familiarity, reach us, so that Brooke's experience is once more re-created in our own.

The plates are seen, of course, not only as white with blue lines, but also as round: that is, they have not only color but a definite shape, or form. So it is with all the other objects which Brooke has seen.

It is impossible to divide the sensations of hearing, smell, and taste in any such fashion. But when we consider that most complex and powerful appeal, touch, we discover three ways in which, either singly or in any combination, we may experience it. "Raindrops couching in cool flowers"; "the benison of hot water"—both of these are capable of rousing in us the remembrance of coolness and heat. We say, then, that one form which the sensation of touch may take is *thermal.*

The quality of the surface we are touching may be the experience the poet is thinking of: "furs to touch"; "the rough male kiss of blankets"; "the cool kindliness of sheets." Finally, there is often a sensation of strain involved—a pressure or a bending or a manipulation of some sort that suggests resistance. The lines from Brooke give almost no example of this. Perhaps the flowers, that "sway through sunny hours," give a hint of what we mean. A much clearer illustration exists in Frost's poem "Birches."

The whole poem, in fact, might be called a glorious re-creation, in our minds, of the fun of swinging. And swinging is a perfect example of our third phase—the sense of strain, the kinaesthetic quality.

> When I see birches bend to left and right
> Across the lines of straighter, darker trees,
> I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
> But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
> Ice-storms do that. . . . .

Frost goes on to describe the farm boy's fun with the birches:

> He learned all there was
> To learn about not launching out too soon
> And so not carrying the tree away
> Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
> To the top branches, climbing carefully
> With the same pains you use to fill a cup
> Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
> Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
> Kicking his way down through the air to the ground. . . . .
>
> —Frost, "Birches," *Mountain Interval*

We find, then, that the sense appeal of *touch* can exist in three ways: as thermal, as tactual, and as kinaesthetic.

It is very interesting to give ourselves practice in thinking more closely about imagery and in studying carefully its manifestations in different poems. It is amazing how differently poets feel sense appeals. We can get the poet's material before us if we make a chart and list his various images under their appropriate headings. Suppose we chart the lines already quoted from "The Great Lover."[1] There is an instant difficulty. Almost every object men-

[1] See Chart I.

tioned belongs in more than one column—"White plates and cups . . . . ringed with blue lines." We have already noted that that is both form and color. Very well; they

CHART I

IMAGE CHART OF "THE GREAT LOVER"

| Sight | Sound | Smell | Taste | Touch |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *A. Form:*<br>White plates and cups . . . .<br>Ringed with blue lines . . . .<br>feathery, faery dust<br>Wet roofs . . . .<br>strong crust of friendly bread<br>Rainbows<br>Raindrops couching in cool flowers . . . .<br>grainy wood<br>live hair shining and free<br>blue-massing clouds<br>Holes in the ground<br>*B. Color:*<br>White plates and cups<br>Ringed with blue lines<br>Wet roofs . . . .<br>Strong crust of friendly bread<br>Rainbows<br>Blue . . . .<br>smoke of wood<br>live hair shining and free | Sweet water's dimpling<br>laugh from tap or spring<br>voices that do sing<br>voices in laughter,<br>deep-panting train | Blue bitter smoke of wood<br>good smell of old clothes<br>comfortable smell of friendly fingers<br>Hair's fragrance<br>musty reek that lingers about dead leaves and last year's ferns | Strong crust of friendly bread<br>Many-tasting food | *A. Tactual:*<br>Cool kindliness of sheets<br>Rough male kiss of blankets<br>furs to touch<br><br>*B. Thermal:*<br>Raindrops couching in cool flowers<br>cool kindliness of sheets<br>benison of hot water<br>sunny hours<br><br>*C. Kinaesthetic:*<br>Flowers . . . .<br>that sway through sunny hours |

should be jotted down in both columns. But there are others even more complex—"Cool kindliness of sheets." Thermal impression first of all; then tactual; then sight, both form and color, if our minds follow the image to the end of its possibilities. But Brooke, as the words show, was interested in the sheets, not as sights, but as the instigators to two *touch* appeals. Hence we drop out the appeal to *sight* (although it is present, of course) and follow Brooke's evident meaning.

So it is with all the images. We may not agree; our disagreements are as instructive as our agreements. There is certainly no more vivid way of getting sympathy with the poet's sensitiveness to the world about him than by dwelling on his use of imagery. People who read a great deal of poetry can see very quickly a poet's fondness for certain sense appeals. But sometimes an actual charting of a poem will reveal unexpected and extremely interesting results, even to an experienced reader.

Another valuable study of imagery results from isolating one type of image at a time—for example, *color*. If the colors in the following three poems are underlined in crayon in as near their appropriate tone as possible, certain definite patterns suddenly appear which we must have felt before but never looked closely enough to observe:

## BEFORE ACTION

I sit before the brazier's glow,
And, basking in the heat,
I dream of daffodils that blow
And lambs that frisk and bleat—

Black lambs that frolic in the snow
Among the daffodils,
In a far orchard that I know
Beneath the Malvern hills.

Next year the daffodils will blow,
And lambs will frisk and bleat;
But I'll not feel the brazier's glow,
Nor any cold nor heat.

—Wilfred Gibson, *Battle*

## AUGUST

Why should this Negro insolently stride
Down the red noonday on such noiseless feet?
Piled in his barrow, tawnier than wheat,
Lie heaps of smoldering daisies, somber-eyed,
Their copper petals shriveled up with pride,
Hot with a superfluity of heat,
Like a great brazier borne along the street
by captive leopard, black and burning pied.

Are there no water-lilies, smooth as cream,
With long stems dripping crystal? Are there none
Like those white lilies, luminous and cool,
Plucked from some hemlock-darkened northern stream
By fair-haired swimmers, diving where the sun
Scarce warms the surface of the deepest pool?

—Elinor Wylie, *Nets to Catch the Wind*

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## CARGOES

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine
With cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,

Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne Coal,
Road-rails, pig lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

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—JOHN MASEFIELD, *Salt Water Poems and Ballads*

Now it is perfectly true that these color images, so interestingly arranged on equally clear but totally different patterns, are not the principal reasons the poets had for composing their poems. Gibson is undoubtedly chiefly concerned with the strangeness of existence and the blank horror of death; Elinor Wylie is thinking of heat and the relief of coolness, though in *August* the color may also be important enough to constitute a reason for her poem's existence; Masefield is contrasting the rich opulence of ancient trade with the tawdry commercialism of modern times. Yet the colors are there, arranged as we see them, and nobody can deny their essential function in emphasizing the theme of the poem.

In the same way, we can, if we think it worth while, isolate any sense-impressions which seem to us particularly

fine, used rarely or with freshness and freedom, and put them down on some sort of chart so that the actual facts about their use are apparent at a glance.

But it is very necessary that each of the poet's images be dwelt on until exactly his feeling about them becomes clear to us. "I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother," says Masefield, speaking for the "fine land, the west land, the land where I belong,"[1] but nobody who is following the poet keenly will image the balm as a sort of mustard plaster on somebody's chest. In fact, this whole matter of imagery must be dominated at every point by the strictest common sense. Samuel Taylor Coleridge explains this in his account of his school days under his "very severe master," the Reverend James Bowyer.

> In our own English compositions . . . . he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. *Lute*, *harp*, and *lyre*, *Muse*, *Muses*, and *inspirations*, *Pegasus*, *Parnassus*, and *Hippocrene* were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming "Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!" Nay certain introductions, similes, and examples, were placed by name on a list of interdiction.[2]

All this is simply a description in old-fashioned language of the sort of stereotyped expression we call a *cliché*, and which sensible poets with a sense of humor have, in every period of the world's history, tried to avoid.

This wholesome insistence on common sense will lead

[1] "The West Wind," *Collected Poems* (1924), p. 35.

[2] *The Complete Works* (ed. Shedd, 1853), III, 147–48.

us at once to detect a good deal of what the English poet, Robert Graves, calls "fake poetry." Follow out this image carefully:

> No more will I endure love's pleasing pain,
> Or round my heart's leg tie his galling chain.[1]

Coleridge quotes this as an example of an "amphibious something" which is neither clear, vivid, image, nor straightforward thinking, often found in so-called "successful poetry" in his day as well as in our own. Or consider another:

> A tree that may in Summer wear
> A nest of robins in her hair.

This most uncomfortable image occurs in a modern poem. Here there is a lack of sensitiveness, not only in the poet, but in the reader who exclaims over the beauty of the result.

Many times, however, especially in poems written at other periods than our own, there is unavoidable difficulty with the meaning of the poet's words. Even in poetry written in our own day, this is true a great many more times than many people imagine. We may take, for example, an experience which happened during a study of the imagery in Amy Lowell's "Garden by Moonlight." The first three lines go:

> A black cat among the roses,
> Phlox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter moon,
> The sweet smells of heliotrope and night-scented stock.[2]

It turned out that almost half the class—girls and boys from Middle West farming country, with no experience of New England flowers—were framing romantic pictures of the "night-scented stock" familiar to them in the

[1] *Ibid.*, III, 159. [2] *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919), pp. 54–55.

capacious barns of their home counties. It was only by pointing out to them all the other flowers of the first three lines and assuring them that there really *was* a flower named "stock," supported by the word of some class members who had grown them or seen samples in florists' windows, that the instructor could persuade them to relinquish the image that, because of its familiarity, filled them with such rapture.

An image chart, definitely showing color, was the means of detecting this erroneous idea in half the papers of the class. The instructor became curious as to why "night-scented stock" appeared as black-and-white, or Jersey brown. From the teacher's point of view, then, the chart was invaluable.

But it is the poems of bygone ages that usually misfire. It is absolutely necessary to make sure in these that we really know just what the poet is talking about.

When icicles hang by the wall,
  And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
  And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipped and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
"Tu-whit, tu-who!" a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
  And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
  And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
"Tu-whit, tu-who!" a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

— SHAKESPEARE, *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, ii, 920 ff.

"Blows his nail." It is amazing how many persons never have seen people warm their hands by blowing on the ends of their fingers. Yet there will be enough boys and girls in any sizable class to help the instructor in his assurances that that is what Shakespeare meant. "Ways be foul." None of our modern network of paved roads. "Greasy Joan doth keel the pot." One little girl always thought that was some strange operation of putting something like a ship's keel on the table when Joan served up the soup. As a trip to the dictionary will assure the inquisitive, it means Joan "cooled" the soup by stirring or skimming. "And coughing drowns the parson's saw." This is the most amusing of any of the images if one can really re-create it, and the most meaningless if one can not. "Saw"—tiresome saying, old in the time of one's grandfather; "coughing drowns" the parson's voice. Whose coughing? The congregation's. Where are they sitting? Anyone whose parents have been ardent churchgoers can complete the image from recollections of Sunday mornings. Who is Marian? Joan's friend, maybe. At any rate, she is somebody cold. Look at her nose. "Roasted crabs." That is a hard one until you realize that crabs often mean crab apples even nowadays, and that there was once a delicious drink called "lamb's wool," made of ale with roasted crab apples bursting with juicy sweetness, floating about in the bowl. So, when all the images are dwelt on until we get all Shakespeare's feeling, we understand exactly *what* the cold was like, and exactly *what* the comfort was like, and thus share his experience.

But there is one more matter that we must understand if we are to get at the sources of imagery. That is the de-

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light the poet feels in putting himself in the state of mind of other beings. This is true not only of men and women and children but, quite literally, of any other created thing. The blackfellow *felt* the personality of the kangaroo. Brooke felt as the "deep-panting train" felt. Consider this poem of Beddoes':

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghost's moonshine.

Ho! Eve, my gray carrion wife,
When we have supped on king's marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is Queen Cleopatra's skull,
'T is cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full;
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghost's moonshine.

—Thomas Lovell Beddoes, "Song"

A very remarkable crow, we must admit, with a vivid feeling for the sorrows of Cleopatra. Still, Beddoes makes the reader feel with the crow as he "sat in the shower" and felt

the weather leaking through every feather. Shelley is identifying himself with a cloud when he starts out,

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,

taking us with him into the cloud world. Sandburg uses the same method in the following verses.

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

Sometimes, the poet does not use the first person. We feel Whitman's intimate knowledge of the spider simply because his imagery is suitable and satisfying.

A noiseless patient spider,
I marked where on the little promontory it stood isolated,
Marked how to explore the vacant vast surrounding
It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

The supreme example of this power comes when a poet like Shakespeare assumes any identity, from the terrified rabbit at the mercy of the hounds, in *Venus and Adonis:*

By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear . . . .

to King Lear, deserted and betrayed, on the heath without shelter, in the storm:

Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
. . . . . .
Here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man . . . .

This was Keats' meaning when he wrote to his friend Woodhouse: "As to the Poetical Character itself . . . . it has no self—It is everything and nothing—It has no char-

acter—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. . . . . A poet . . . . has no Identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body."[1]

It is perfectly clear, if we stop to think, that the only way this identification of himself with other creatures can come to us is by the poet's expression of it in words. And though the rhythm and the sound of words is equally important with imagery in the poet's work, yet his quickest and most understandable approach to us is, perhaps, his representation of sense appeals.

But we must not think these are always present. Many poems which no one would deny are fine and even great make no use of imagery at all, or of images so vague and general that they are not the primary reason for the poem's existence. We must study the poet's meaning closely and sympathetically in each case to feel the full power of his use or refusal to use imagery. In *The Shropshire Lad*, Housman writes:

> If truth in hearts that perish
> Could move the powers on high,
> I think the love I bear you
> Should make you not to die.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This long and sure-set liking,
> This boundless will to please,
> Oh, you should live forever
> If there were help in these.

Here there is a deep and rich emotional association which raises the words themselves to a plane of lofty feeling, without any help from imagery. In fact, imagery might

[1] *Letters*, p. 184.

distract from the poignancy of Housman's utterance. The same thing is true of Shakespeare's "Sylvia," and countless other poems.

But what of such a poem as Frost's "Fire and Ice"?

> Some say the world will end in fire,
> Some say in ice.
> From what I've tasted of desire
> I hold with those who favor fire.
> But if it had to perish twice,
> I think I know enough of hate
> To say that for destruction ice
> Is also great
> And would suffice.

When a class was asked to make a chart showing Elinor Wylie's images in "August" and a companion chart of "Fire and Ice," a very interesting fact became evident. Both are studies which have for their base a contrast of heat and cold. But Elinor Wylie's chart shows the greatest diversity of sense impressions—of images. On the other hand, only two words, "fire" and "ice," appeared on the Frost chart. These occurred under the heading "Thermal" and were the cause of intense discussion as to exactly what an image is. It is clear that the general terms "fire" and "ice" give us nothing like the definiteness of reality to be found in the images of Miss Wylie's poem. But then, Frost did not intend they should. "Desire" and "hate" are likewise hot and cold—each a destructive force great enough to end creation. In this poem, nothing would be gained by causing the reader's mind to build many and varied images.

The fact of the matter is, that while imagery is *one* of the poet's resources, it is only one. The next chapters will attempt to show that he has others.

## CHAPTER II

## THE APPEAL OF RHYTHM

The white moth to the closing bine,
  The bee to the opened clover,
And the gipsy blood to the gipsy blood
  Ever the wide world over.

. . . . . .

Both to the road again, again!
  Out on a clean sea-track—
Follow the cross of the gipsy trail
  Over the world and back!

. . . . . .

The wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
  The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
  As it was in the days of old.

If we chant these lines from Kipling's "Gipsy Trail"[1] aloud, whether or not we follow the melody many of us have sung for years, we see at once that it is the swing of the lines that makes them particularly delightful. This is true of the earliest jingles we remember:

Sing a song of sixpence,
Pocket full of rye. . . . .

It is clear that this love of swinging word tunes is identically the same as the fun of steady, even walking; of dancing; of all the underlying activity of the human body. It is the appeal of rhythm—universal, not very clearly understood, but as much a part of our lives as eating and sleeping. In fact, the even recurrence of eating and sleeping

[1] Inclusive Edition (1920), p. 207.

times is one of the ways in which rhythm gives zest to the twenty-four hour span of our transitory days. And in the same way, rhythm enters into the most important, though usually unconsidered, facts about ourselves. Stop a moment and put your finger on your pulse. Its evenness, its "magnificent come-and-go," gives instant assurance that the rhythm of our heart-beat is unimpaired. Or notice for a moment the placid, steady intake and outgo of breath. These things are so commonplace that it may seem hardly necessary to mention them. Yet their regularity, their "periodicity," is the same element that lies at the root of our delight in the recurrences of movement, whether it be movement of walking, dancing, events in regular, expected sequence, or of words that sing as we chant them.

Roll down—roll down to Rio—
Roll really down to Rio!
Oh, I'd love to roll to Rio
Some day before I'm old!

It would be difficult, indeed, to read these words without feeling a lively lift and swing.

We must understand, however, first of all, that any word sequence has rhythm of a kind. Read the preceding sentence over again aloud, and notice how it falls into emphasis and lack-of-emphasis: "We must *understand*, *however*, *first* of *all*, that *any word sequence* has *rhythm* of a *kind*." Free-verse writers believe that they can use words most effectively in this irregular prose sequence, arranging it slightly in lines of varying lengths:

A black cat among the roses,
Phlox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter moon,
The sweet smells of heliotrope and night-
scented stock. . . . .

Amy Lowell is developing ordinary prose rhythm here, organizing it to some extent by marking off line divisions, but not making words flow in an even rhythmic pattern.

But poets, for innumerable generations, have felt the powerful attraction of a steady beat pulsing through their words:

The white moth to the closing bine,
The bee to the opened clover,
And the gipsy blood to the gipsy blood
Ever the wide world over.

Kipling has set up here an even, definite, dependable beat. We can chant the pattern of the line without saying the words:

Ti tum tum ti ti tum ti tum,
Ti tum ti ti tum ti tum ti,
Ti ti tum ti tum ti ti tum ti tum
Tum ti ti tum tum tum ti.

Chant in the same way the third stanza quoted:

The wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
As it was in the days of old.

Ti tum tum ti ti tum tum tum,
Ti tum ti ti tum ti tum
Ti ti tum ti ti tum ti ti tum ti ti tum
Ti ti tum ti ti tum ti tum.

We find we can go on indefinitely with this little four-line tune, varying it slightly, as we have done in these two stanzas. Our expectation of the four-line beat has been set up, and there is a certain pleasure in recognizing the same recurrences. But every line would show small differences, if we should take pains to follow them out in detail. And

that is one of the charms of rhythm which we never notice unless our attention is called to it. We are pleased at the recurrences of a pattern we recognize; we are delighted to find it is not just exactly what we thought it was going to be. Rhythmical repetition with its subtle variations very nearly provides us with this highly desirable state of affairs.

If one thinks carefully about rhythm in any art—in painting, music, architecture, for example—it is clear that periodic return of pattern, joined with variety in detail, is the basis of rhythmic enjoyment. We can test this most easily, perhaps, by thinking of dance steps. We see a boy clogging in perfect time to the beat of the orchestra. One, two; one, two—the time continues without irregularity; but notice the variations in his steps; and notice also our spellbound attention, made up equally of the hypnosis of the steady, expected stress of the time-beat and of the fascination of feeling our expectation broken by his departures from exactly the same thing that he did before.

This is what happens when we read or sing the twelve stanzas of "The Gypsy Trail." We may make a chart of these, so that it will be easy to see at a glance the pattern underlying all twelve stanzas and the variations in each line. This is done by using graph paper ruled in quarter-inch squares. Let each square stand for one syllable. Across the top of the sheet number the squares, first counting the syllables of the longest line in the poem. For example, the longest line of the three stanzas which were quoted from "The Gipsy Trail" is the third of the third stanza:

And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid . . . .

twelve syllables. Twelve squares will be numbered across the top of the paper, then, if we chart these three stanzas. There are four lines in each. Each line will have a row of squares to itself, and each group of four lines, a stanza, will be distinctly separated from the others. The first line is then read aloud with the intonation which gives most clearly the meaning that Kipling probably intended. Sometimes, especially at first, before the ear is trained to catch word-stress accurately, it is necessary to read aloud again and again, to make sure that the stress emphasized is the one that echoes the poet's thought most closely:

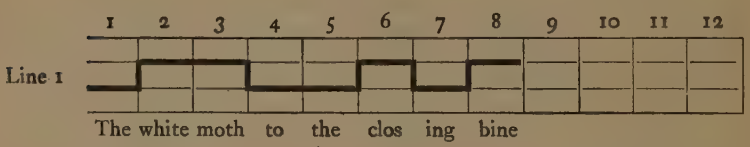
The *white moth* to the *clos*ing *bine* . . . .

Kipling certainly did *not* write:

The *white* moth *to* the *clos*ing *bine* . . . .

Our problem is to represent as closely as possible on our chart the stress we feel in our voices. Let the lower

FIG. 1




edge of our quarter-inch squares represent unstressed syllables; the upper will represent stressed syllables. We may graph the first line, then, as shown in Figure 1 (stressed and unstressed syllables are connected with a vertical line, merely for convenience). All twelve lines of the stanzas may be charted in the same way. At first it will seem difficult to realize that, in general, everybody will agree on

stress, so that, except for a very few differences, our chart will represent a consensus of opinion. It is necessary, however, to be sure of the natural word accent. Many students who have never thought of stress are confused by the simplest words. "Opened," for example, consists of two syllables, stressed on the first. It is pronounced "*OP*-end."

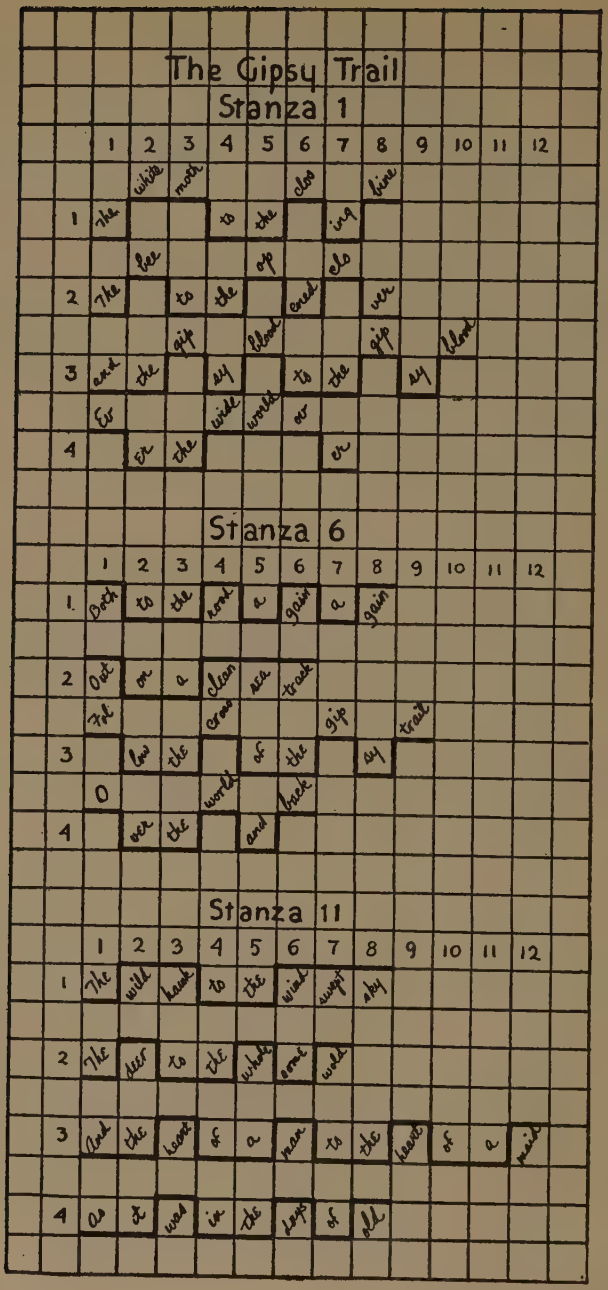
The complete chart appears in Figure 2.

There are two features we must examine very closely if we are to understand our principle of repetition with variations in detail, as it appears in these stanzas from "The Gipsy Trail." First, what are the similarities—the repetitions? Second, what are the variations with which Kipling departs from the pattern?

The similarities are very obvious, if we read the chart carefully. There is a pattern of three stanzas, each of four lines, each of alternating long and short lines (except that there is no alternation of long and short lines in the first part of the first stanza). The long lines vary from eight to twelve syllables; the short from six to eight. Out of the twelve lines, seven begin with an unstressed foot. The long lines (first and third) tend to carry *four* stresses; the short lines (second and fourth), *three*.

But even as we try to list the similarities, we find ourselves noting differences. The only constant repetitions we have found are the return of the four-line stanza, with its *tendency* to alternate long and short lines of a fairly regular syllable count, and its *tendency* to carry *four* stresses to the long lines, *three* to the short. This stanza form, then, we may call a "pattern." We have already begun to describe how varied it is in execution. Besides the differences in line length, we noticed how some lines begin with

FIG. 2


The Gipsy Trail
Stanza 1
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
1 The wild moth to the dog flies
2 The lee to the up old
3 The gip to the flood gip blood
4 And the sky to the sky
Er wide words or
Er the er
Stanza 6
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
1 Back to the road a gain a gain
2 Out on a clean sea track
The grass gip trail
3 by the of the sky
O work back
4 over the and
Stanza 11
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
1 The wild hawk to the wind swept sky
2 The deer to the wind ernt wind
3 And the heart of a man to the heath of a maid
4 As it used in the days of old

unstressed syllables—seven of them, in fact—and some with stressed. Only a careful reading of every one of the twelve stanzas, and a determination of the *feel* of their dominant rhythm, besides this actual count, can give us grounds for deciding whether the pattern Kipling was following begins with an unstressed syllable or a stressed. If it is unstressed, we call the rhythm "rising." If it is stressed, we say the rhythm is "falling." As our chart stands, there is little question that, so far as the three stanzas go, the rhythm is "rising." Read the stanzas again, aloud, and notice how the seven unstressed beginnings give the dominant tone to all twelve lines.

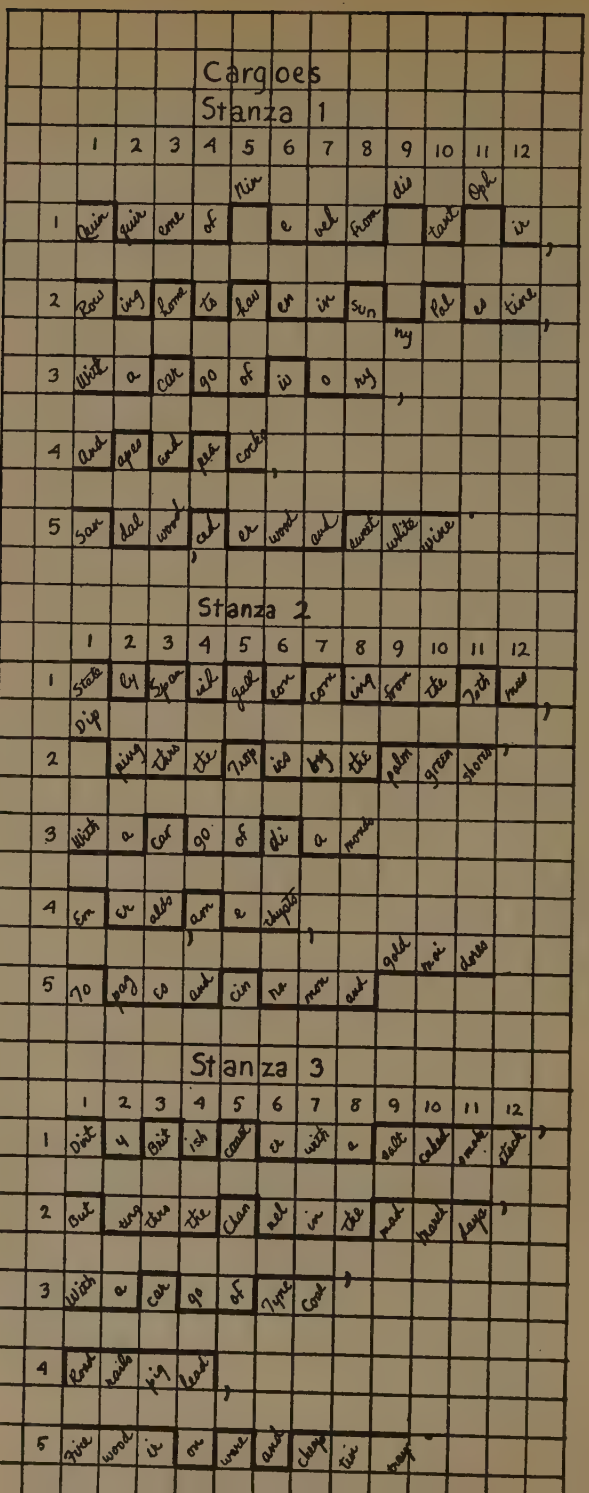
In just this way every line presents a fascinating study, not only on its own account, but because of all the lines before it and all that are to come after. No one line can be judged alone; it is a part of rhythmic texture of the whole poem.

Another stanzaic poem of great interest rhythmically is Masefield's "Cargoes." Here the chart (Fig. 3) shows at once a pattern of three five-line stanzas, the line lengths repeating themselves, but, on close examination, revealing minute but very significant differences; the *relative* line length of each stanza remains the same; the actual syllable count of the third stanza is demonstrably shorter than the other two. Thus, the syllable length of the lines of the

first stanza runs: 12, 12, 8, 5, 10;
of the second: 12, 11, 8, 6, 11;
of the third: 12, 11, 7, 4, 9.

This is certainly one explanation of the curious choppy effect we feel when the third stanza is read aloud after the first and second.

FIG. 3


Cargoes
Stanza 1
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Quin quin eme of Tir e wel from dis tant Ork in
Row ing lone ly how ard in sun my pal es tine
With a car go of ivo ry
And apes and peac ocks
San dal wood, ced ar wood, and sweet white wine
Stanza 2
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Dip
stea ly Spa nish gal leon com ing from the Tith mus
ping thru the Trop ics by the palm green shore
With a car go of di a monds
En ve lops jam e thysts
70 pog co and cin na mon and gold mi rabe
Stanza 3
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Dirt y Brit ish coast er with a salt caked smok estack
Out ward thru the Chan nel in the mist Pearl Jaspe
With a car go of Tyne Coal
Red nails rig head
Fine wood in an inner and cheap tin trays

Another fact is even more important in securing the same effect. The number of stressed syllables in the first stanza is eighteen; in the second, nineteen; in the third, twenty-six. The smooth undulating movements of the first and second stanzas are here broken up with a vengeance. There is a perfect reflection in the poet's rhythmic feeling of the significance of his rich imagery in the first two stanzas and of the drab blacks and browns of the third. The rhythm of the poem, then, reinforces the imagery. In our next chapter, "The Sounds of Words," it will be seen how the same significance attaches itself to Masefield's choice of words.

Anyone who has read much poetry recalls a great deal that is not written in stanzas: *Paradise Lost*, for example, and Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." In the chapter on "Imagery," lines were quoted from Robert Frost's "Birches" which are certainly not in stanzaic arrangement. What about our rhythmic principle of repetition with variation in these? The only way to answer this question is to examine three pieces of such verse closely.

I

Now had the Almighty Father from above,
From the pure empyrean where he sits
High throned above all height, bent down his eye,
His own works and their works at once to view:
About him all the sanctities of Heaven
Stood thick as stars, and from his sight received
Beatitude past utterance; on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only son; on the earth he first beheld
Our two first parents, yet the only two
Of mankind, in the happy garden placed,
Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
Uninterrupted joy, unrivalled love.

—Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. III, ll. 33–46

II

All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle. With the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

—Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. I, ll. 433–46

III

When I see birches bend from left to right
Across the lines of straighter, darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.

—Frost, "Birches," ll. 1–13

When these three selections are charted, one fact becomes instantly apparent: there is an arrangement of ten syllables to a line, with very few variations. These are, for the most part, in the lines from Frost. But in spite of

these variations, we have a firm underlying pattern set up in our rhythmic consciousness. This consists not only of the ten-syllable line length, but of a definite rise and fall of stress. Try to hum a wordless tune again, as we did with "The Gipsy Trail," to catch Frost's rhythm:

Ti tum tum tum ti tum ti tum ti tum
Ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum
Ti tum ti tum tum tum ti tum ti ti.

It is even possible to walk along to this swing, if we accent the right-foot's beat. But to chant all thirteen lines of even one selection so evenly with such unvarying stress would cause unbearable monotony. We can see, however, that

Ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum

is the underlying pattern from which the poet departs on his excursions with differentiations of stress. In each selection there is at least one line where the natural flow of the words gives exactly the pattern:

1. His only son; on earth he first beheld . . . .
2. We hissed along the polished ice, in games . . . .
3. Across the lines of straighter, darker trees . . . .

In these we are able to hear so distinctly and explicitly the tune of the pattern which lies under every line, that the "set" of the beat is more strongly emphasized than ever.

This pattern of ten syllables, with the even syllables stressed, is a favorite poetic rhythm in English verse. Its technical name is "iambic pentameter," which means that the movement is rising (unstress, stress, unstress, stress, and so on) and that there are five of these pairs of unstress, stress, in each line. When no rhyme occurs, the measure is called "blank verse." It is especially important to know

exactly what this particular pattern is, because it is not only the meter of *Paradise Lost*, of Wordsworth's most important poems, of many of Tennyson's, and of Frost's and other contemporary poets', but the rhythm, for the most part, of Shakespeare's plays. We are always coming upon it, and so, of course, should be able to understand exactly what it is and to appreciate the infinitely varied subtleties of its use:

> Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not:
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming
> The clouds methought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop on me, that when I waked
> I cried to dream again.

J. Middleton Murry, in discussing "The Central Problem of Style" (which turns out to be identically these matters of imagery, rhythm, and sound appeal in words), quotes these nine lines from *The Tempest* as an example of rhythm that co-operates in and intensifies the feeling Shakespeare is trying to produce. "The musical effect," he says, "of the dominant falling rhythm, caused by the hypermetrical syllable, is perfect." There are, out of the nine lines, five which are eleven-syllabled, or "hypermetrical." Four of these are caused by words which naturally begin with a stressed and end with an unstressed syllable: "noises," "voices," "dreaming," "riches." The other eleven-syllabled line (l. 2), ends with two words, "hurt not," which probably would seem to most people to bear equal stress. Perhaps some would think "hurt" bears more stress

than "not." In that case, the line also shows falling rhythm. At any rate, many words besides these at the end are words of naturally falling rhythm: "thousand," "twangling," "instruments," "after," "open," "Ready." All of these explain why Murry can speak of the rhythm of this particular piece of blank verse as "falling." Ordinarily, as we have seen, the pattern of blank verse is "rising," that is, from unstressed to stressed.

So far we have been discussing the sort of rhythm which walking suggests: one, two; one, two. This is called "duple" rhythm. That is, each beat may be considered one of two counts. This pair of counts we call, in conventional treatments of rhythm, a "foot." When we say that blank verse consists of lines of iambic pentameter, then, we mean that each line consists of five feet, each made up of a duple rising foot.

But suppose we read these lines aloud:

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan,
Just for one day?

To try to chant these as we walk is a very painful process. But if we waltz, or beat in one, two, three, time, an entirely satisfactory life comes into the rhythm:

| One | two | three | One | two | three |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Time | you | old | gip | sy | man |
| Will | you | not | stay | — | — |
| Put | up | your | car | a | van |
| Just | for | one | day | — | — |

There is a distinct grouping of one, two, three, in separate sequences, with a very slight sense of separation between

each group. Our rhythm, then, is not duple: that is, one, two; one, two; but is triple: one, two, three; one, two three. Each unit (or foot), contains, not two beats, but three.

A chart (Fig. 4) of a few lines from "Time, you old gipsy man" shows these facts very plainly. It shows also that the rhythm is distinctly falling.

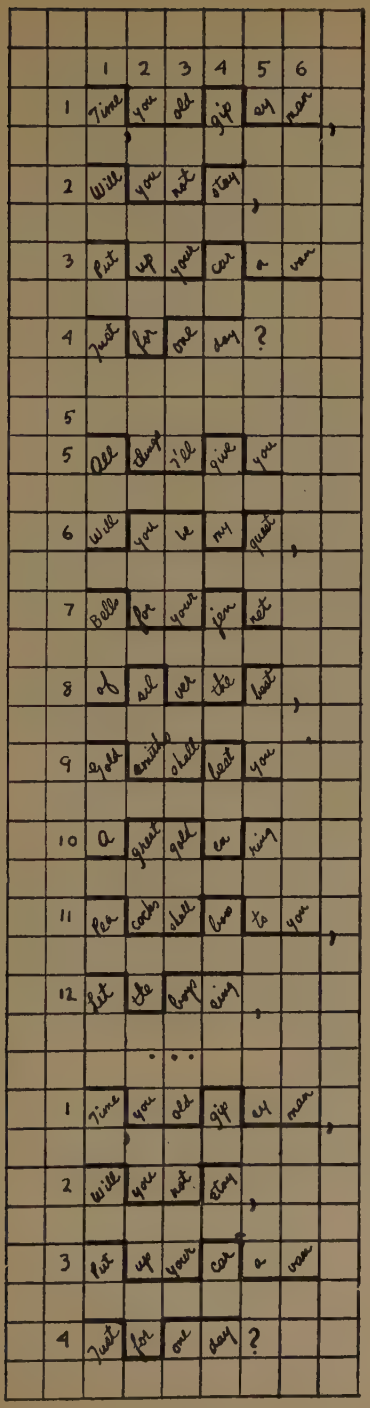
But of course poets also use triple rhythm that is rising. In "Saul," Browning employed a long fifteen-syllable line of five stresses in rising triple rhythm:

Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal; the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and soul and the senses forever in joy!

To read this aloud is to feel the triple swing, of course. And this also shows up with the greatest clearness on a chart: two unstressed beats to nearly every stressed. The exceptions can be accounted for by the fundamental rhythmic principle we have pointed out so many times: the necessity of avoiding monotony by variations.

But "The Gipsy Trail," "Cargoes," "Time, You Old Gipsy Man," and "Saul" are only four poems out of myriads which will richly reward investigation of rhythmic

FIG. 4—Triple rhythm


1 2 3 4 5 6
1 Time you old gip ay man
2 Will you not stay
3 Put up your car a van
4 Just for one day ?
5
5 All things I'll give you
6 Will you be my guest
7 Bells for your jen ret
8 Of sil ver the best
9 Gold smiths shall beat you
10 A great gold en ring
11 Pea cocks shall bow to you
12 Let the boys sing
1 Time you old gip ay man
2 Will you not stay
3 Put up your car a van
4 Just for one day ?

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan,
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,

. . . . . .

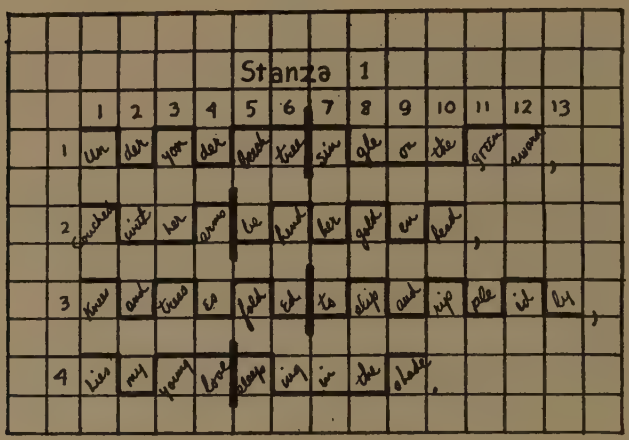
Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan,
Just for one day?

appeal. There is Meredith's "Love in the Valley," for instance:

> Under yonder beech-tree single on the greensward,
> Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
> Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
> Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.

What is this entrancing rhythm? We can walk swiftly and lightly to its music. We find more difficulty in waltzing

Fig. 5


Stanza 1
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
1 Under yonder beech-tree single on the greensward,
2 Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
3 Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
4 Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.

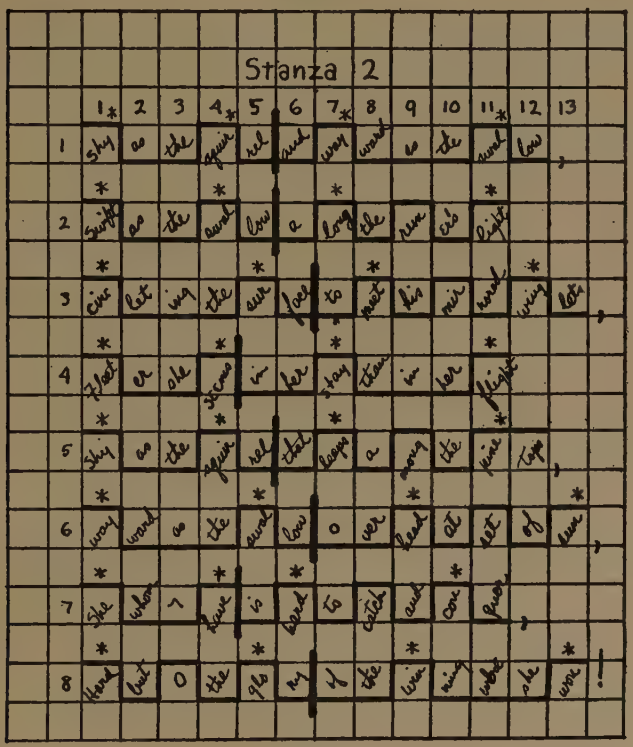
easily. Is it duple, then? A chart of the first four lines (Fig. 5) seems to prove that they, at least, are dupe: that is, the stress seems to fall in proportions of one, two; one, two—not of one, two, three; one, two, three. But no decision can be made fairly until we examine more of the poem. Let us study the second stanza:

> Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
> Swift as the swallow along the river's light
> Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
> Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.

Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

A few things now become undeniably clear (Fig. 6): there is no question but that Meredith is using falling rhythm.

FIG. 6




Then there is a very marked pause in each line: after the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllables. This is called a "caesura" or a "caesural pause," and naturally comes in a line where the syllable-count is rather long. It would be interesting

to turn back to the examples of Milton's, Wordsworth's, and Frost's blank verse and notice the caesural pauses there. But the Meredith poem shows them more prominently than any of the pieces we have studied hitherto. There is an even more interesting fact about the time beat in the poem. If we walk, repeating the lines, we discover that left, right; left, right, coincides perfectly with the principal stresses of each line. We may assert, then, that the rhythm is duple.

| Left | right | left | right |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Shy* as the | *squir*rel and | *way*ward as the | *swal*low . . . . |
| Left | right | left | right |
| *Swift* as the | *swal*low a | *long* the river's | *light* . . . . |

and so on. The stresses are starred on the chart (Fig. 6). In each line there are four of them. In the conventional phrasing, this is therefore a poem written in "tetrameter." But the great difficulty of using technical names comes from the fact that just as soon as students learn them they attempt to fit the rhythm to the name. This happens so commonly that almost always the actual feeling of the rhythm is lost. Many teachers, therefore, prefer to give as few names as possible; only enough to describe what is actually in existence.[1]

Before we leave Meredith's "Love in the Valley," let us study one more stanza, the nineteenth:

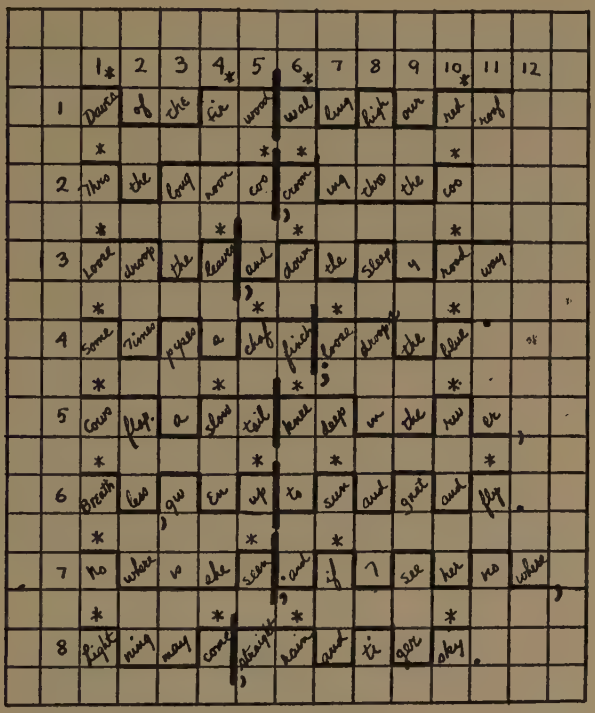
Doves of the firwood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.

[1] Formal prosody can be developed from these charts, however. Iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic, spondaic, and pyrrhic feet, can all be identified and discussed.

Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

If we compare this stanza closely with our chart of the second, we find an amazing confirmation of something we

FIG. 7



have already felt if we have read the poem aloud with sensitiveness and understanding. The nineteenth stanza is *slower* than the second. Notice Meredith's imagery: it is a hot, drowsy, summer noon; all the sights and sounds reproduce that experience in the reader. The rhythm *actually*

echoes and thus strengthens the impression given us by the imagery. If one turns back to the chart of the second stanza, one sees that, with only seven exceptions, the stress follows the pattern of the four-stress-only line—a swift, almost darting movement. This is the main rhythm of the poem and seems to give Meredith's feeling for the exquisite light-hearted, light-footed girl whose nature he is trying to recapture and set in words for us. But in the nineteenth stanza there are nineteen extra stresses uncalled for by the pattern. Try to chant this as you walk, and see for yourself how you are held up on such a line as

*Through* the long noon *coo*, *crooning* through the *coo*.

The point of all this discussion is a very simple one. No poem can really be felt rhythmically without dwelling on its actual rhythmic structure. We have studied only two and a half stanzas of Meredith's "Love in the Valley." A deep love of poetry leads one to a closer and closer sympathy with the rhythmic effect which every poem contains.

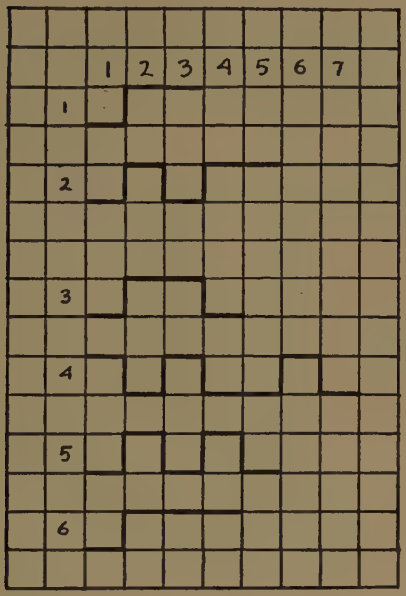
This consideration of rhythm in poetry, however, would be incomplete without a return to a brief discussion of the theory underlying free verse. We stated at the beginning of the chapter that "free-verse writers believe that they can use words most effectively in the irregular rhythmic sequence of prose, arranging it slightly in lines which emphasize whatever purpose they may have in mind."

Exactly how does this work out?

In "free verse," although the line length has nothing to do with the syllable count, the poet chooses to make a definite line arrangement on the page. He does not write his poem like prose. This appeal to the eye will be dis-

cussed more fully in a later chapter. Here it is enough to notice how the rhythm of free verse seems to follow speech cadence.

FIG. 8




The fog comes
on little cat feet.

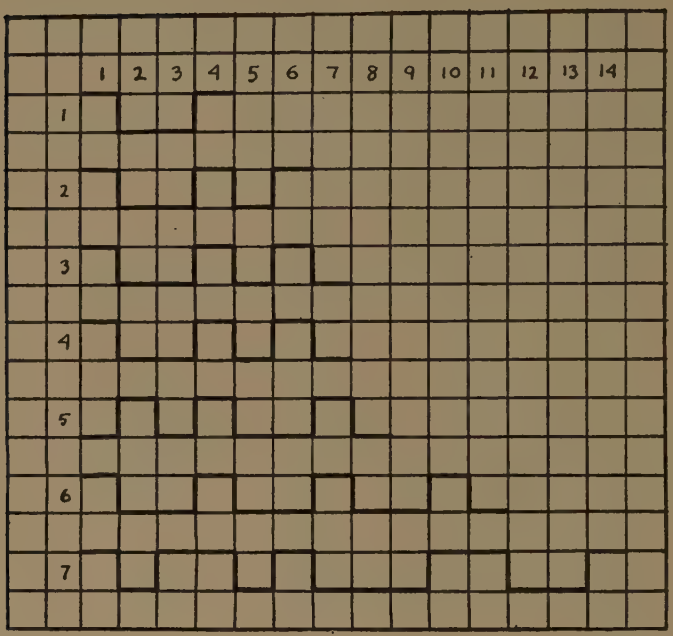
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Suppose we print Carl Sandburg's lovely little poem "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard" as prose:

> Stuff of the moon runs in the lapping sand out to the longest shadows. Under the curving willows, and round the creep of the wave-line, fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

If this is read aloud, the voice will be bound to pause at the places Sandburg chose for his line divisions. The same thing is true of "Fog."

FIG. 9




Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave-line,
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

—SANDBURG, "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard"

The charts of these poems show how interestingly this cadenced rhythm arranges itself. See Figures 8 and 9.

In free verse, then, the poet chooses to forgo the psychological advantage of the steady underlying beat of regularized stress and unstress, with its subtleties of variation. He prefers a rhythm nearer to that of prose in its irregularity, but arranged into line units on an emotional rather than rhythmic basis. "Fog," for example, shows an alternation of long and short lines, the "cadences" falling at natural voice pauses; the arrangement itself thus suggesting, possibly, the drifting quality of fog. The rhythmic movement of "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard" is just as interesting in its patterned cadence: there is a gradual broadening out into the "wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night"; a singularly appealing arrangement for this particular image.

But for the most part, poets find the regularity and variation of a syllabled rhythmic beat more generally effective than free verse in expressing every sort of emotional appeal from the most powerful to the most exquisitely delicate. We may be certain, however, that in any fine poem, whatever the specific rhythmic medium, this strange, musical, little-understood element that is so much a part of all of us will be there in some form, waiting to be found and enjoyed.

# CHAPTER III

## THE SOUND OF WORDS

Early in the eighteenth century Alexander Pope remarked to a friend, "It is not enough that nothing offends the Ear, but a good Poet will adapt the very Sounds, as well as Words, to the things he treats of. So that there is (if one may express it so) a Style of Sound."[1] That is true today as much as it ever was; and we can find effective use of word sound in work not usually thought of as "poetical." Writers of advertisements, for example, are keenly conscious of the value of sounds in attracting attention. "Ivory is the floating buoy that cheers you on. When you come spluttering from the first splash, Ivory bobs within your hand's reach, ready to cover you with its gentle, cleansing foam. . . . . Ivory, kind to everything it touches. $99\frac{44}{100}$ pure. 'It floats.' "

This illustrates very well the effectiveness of a tissue of sound in which certain repetitions strike the ear in a way that emphasizes them pleasurably. It is as though a little spotlight were thrown on the letter *b*, for example, when we hear, after the word *buoy*, the word *bob;* the *spl* of *spluttering* and *splash* are a somewhat more obvious example of the same thing; and the *ch* of *cheer* has a kind of reinforcement in the *c* of *cover* and of *cleansing*. If we repeat aloud the words "Ivory, kind to everything it touches," and think only of sound, we hear the long *i*'s of the first two words, and the two balancing *t*'s of *to* and

[1] *Letters of Mr. Pope* (1735), I, 73.

*touches*, the brief short *i*'s of *thing*, *it*, and the last syllable of *touches*. For of course, if one stops to think a moment, it is the sound of the last syllable of *touches* that is important; not its spelling. And all through this study of sound, it is necessary to bear this fact firmly in mind. We are considering the way in which sounds strike the ear, not the way in which words are spelled.

Occasionally, in advertisements, these tricks of repetitions of vowel and consonant are combined with jingling rhymes. When this happens, we have a very conspicuous use of words for their sound value. It is the most quickly apparent of all such uses, certainly, to the untrained ear.

> Both to the road again, again!
> Out on a clean sea-track—
> Follow the cross of the gipsy trail
> Over the world and back!

Here, when they are pointed out, it is easy to see the long *ea* sounds of *clean* and *sea*, and the pleasant echo of the *tr*'s in *track* and *trail*. But these are unconscious sources of pleasure usually, until the poem is carefully studied. On the other hand, the rhyme is instantly felt, not only because it is in itself a delightful recurrence of chiming sound, but because it helps mold the stanza into shape which is recognizable as a separate little unit in the whole poem. As stanza follows stanza, the same rhyme scheme turns out to be repeated, so that our ear learns to expect the chime of sound at regular intervals. But the poet is not always so careful to fulfil our expectations. Every poem is a law unto itself, and there is no way to classify or label the uses of rhyme beyond a few very conventional patterns.

Each poem, then, should be read, and the rhyme

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noticed and enjoyed if the poet has chosen to use it. Much very fine poetry has been composed without it, as any reader of *Paradise Lost* knows; Milton explained this in his prefatory note: "The measure is English Heroic Verse without Rime . . . . Rime being no necessary Adjunct or true Ornament of Poem or good Verse . . . . but the Invention of a barbarous Age . . . . trivial and of no true musical delight."[1] Modern writers of free verse, likewise, have many times rejected it, along with the device of regular rhythm.[2] It is not at all necessary, then; and its presence or absence depends, as do all the poet's resources, on his purpose and its most effective fulfilment. Gibson, for example, in the little three-stanza poem, "Before Action," already studied for color imagery, has chosen to provide every end-word with an echo:

I sit before the brazier's glow,
And, drowsing in the heat,
I dream of daffodils that blow
And lambs that frisk and bleat—

Black lambs that frolic in the snow
Among the daffodils,
In a far orchard that I know
Beneath the Malvern hills.

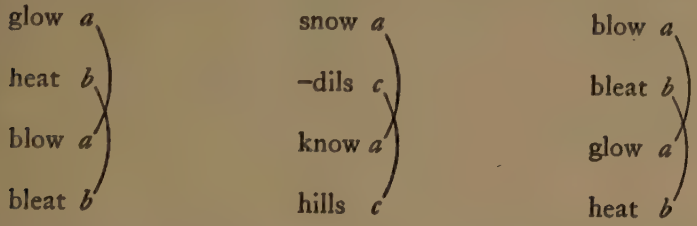
Next year the daffodils will blow,
And lambs will frisk and bleat;
But I'll not feel the brazier's glow,
Nor any cold or heat.

The clearest way to see exactly how Gibson used rhyme here, is to write the same letter after each repetition of

[1] *Poems* (Ed. Grierson, 1925), II, 2.

[2] But see Amy Lowell's poem in free verse, "Patterns," where it is used most effectively. See also her "polyphonic prose" pieces in *Can Grande's Castle* (Macmillan, 1918).

sound, and, when this conventional marking of the rhyme scheme has been made, *to draw lines connecting similar sounds*. The usefulness of these lines will become more apparent when elaborate rhyming patterns are studied. The rhyming scheme of the Gibson poem may be charted thus:

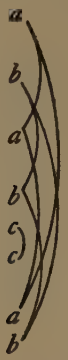



The advantage of placing the stanzas in a horizontal column lies in the fact that a glance across the page shows at once where variations in the rhyming scheme occur. In this piece, for example, the symmetry given by the similar rhyme pattern of the first and third stanzas, broken by the "-dils-hills" variation in the second, is an important re-inforcement of the symmetry of the color imagery mentioned in the first chapter.

In just this way, every finely wrought poem which uses rhyme as an ornament is worth studying for its rhyming pattern. Swinburne's "Huntsman's Chorus," from *Atalanta in Calydon*, may be interestingly charted:

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
  The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
  With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
  The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Here the pattern is seen to be:




The seven stanzas show only one variation. The rush and sweep of the poem is, in some way or other, very much helped by this inevitable and unvarying flow of the word chimes, with their intricate cross-weavings.

Perhaps these two examples will show sufficiently the charming and diverse ways in which rhyme may be made to help the poet's purpose. But we must return to a more careful consideration of the first use of word sounds which we noticed in our advertisements. "Ivory: Kind to everything it touches"; we examined this for sound repetitions, for repetitions of vowels and consonants. If a poet uses every resource to be discovered in words, he will, of course, take full advantage of words as sound.

> Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos, sob on the long cool winding saxophones.
> Go to it, O jazzmen.
> Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy tin pans, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-husha with the slippery sandpaper, . . . .

exclaims Sandburg, reproducing jazz in consonants and vowels. Browning's poems are full of this expressiveness of sound. A study of "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" reveals a most interesting use of an ugly guttural *g*. This hateful sound runs through all the nine stanzas of the poem like a leitmotif in a Wagner opera, sometimes coming into prominence, sometimes sinking into the background. The first stanza opens with a growl:

> *G*r-r-r—there *g*o, my heart's abhorrence!
> Water your damned flower-pots, do!
> If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
> *G*od's blood, would not mine kill you!

To underline the *g*'s is to see at once how Browning has set the tone of murderous spite. The evil monk continues planning the overthrow of Lawrence. In the eighth stanza he thinks of a particularly unpleasant trick:

> Or, my scrofulous French novel
> On *g*ray paper with blunt type!
> Simply *g*lance at it, you *g*rovel
> Hand and foot in Belial's *g*ripe:
> If I double down its pages
> At the woful sixteenth print,
> When he *g*athers his *g*reen*g*ages,
> Ope a sieve and slip it in't!

The last stanza ends with a final series of *g*'s:

> 'St, there's Vespers. "Plena *g*ratiâ,
> "Ave, Vir*g*o"; *G*r-r-r—you swine!

It would be too lengthy a process to go through this poem and show how the *g* sounds are not in the least isolated, as one might think from this analysis of them. No poet, of course, repeats one sound alone without sur-

rounding it with contrasts, similarities—all the subtle varieties of sound effects which constitute an effective texture of spoken words. A stanza from Browning's "The Heretic's Tragedy" illustrates this intricacy of appeal:

> Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
> Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
> Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
> Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
> Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
> Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
> Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
> Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

The curious sound-texture of this stanza seems to be dominated by *ch*. But before the line appears in which this is first heard, we have caught the repetitions of *p* and *b*, and the strange combinations of the line

> Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith . . . .

One feels that the extraordinary sounds give a sense of the special horror of the scene.

It is not very often, however, that the reader of poetry comes upon such a dramatically conspicuous sound effect. Usually, the poet has woven a tapestry which we find delightful without realizing the strands which go to make up the tone quality of the piece. In the work of a fine poet these are always worth dwelling on, however, and studying in detail.

To illustrate this, let us read Masefield's "Cargoes" once more. We have seen that the imagery of the first two stanzas of this poem is rich and full of color, contrasting with the drab brown and black of modern sea-commerce in the third stanza; and that the rhythm with its long undulations in the first two stanzas, and its short,

choppy movement in the third, strengthens the effect of the imagery. If we read the poem aloud, listening only to sound, we find that the first two stanzas are much smoother than the third. The words flow more easily as we form them. There is a simple reason for this. Consonants separated by vowels are easily pronounced. Consonants grouped together are difficult, taking time and care in enunciation. Try to say quickly

> Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
> Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:

and you will find this to be true. If we follow Raymond Alden's scheme for "noting the organization of consonantal sounds,"[1] adapting it slightly to show every consonant group in "Cargoes," we can see the reason for the easy flow of the first two stanzas, and the difficulty of the third:

Qu . nqu . . . . . f N . . . . . fr . md . st . nt . . . . .
. . . . ngh . mt . . . . . n s . . . . . st . . .
. . . . . rg . . . . . .
. nd . ps. . nd p . . . . cks
. . nd . lw . . d[s] . . . rw . . . . nd sw . . t wh . tw . . .

St . tl . Sp . . . sh g . . . . . n c . . . ng fr . mth . . sthm . .
. . . . . ng thr . . . . . Tr . . . cs b . . . . . lm-gr . . n sh . . . .
. . . . . rg . . f d . . . . nds
. . . . . lds . . . . . sts
. . . . . nd [s] . . . . . nd g . ld m . . . . . .

. . rt . Br . . . sh c . . st . r w . . . . . lt-c . kt sm . k st . ck
. . . . . ng thr . . . . . n th . . . d M . rch d . . .
. . . . . rg . . f T . n c . . .
. . . d-r . . ls p . g-l . . .
. . r w . . . . . n-w . . . . nd ch . . p t . n tr . . .

Although the actual consonant clusters here are not markedly greater in any of the stanzas (twenty-three in

[1] *An Introduction to Poetry* (1909), p. 212.

the first, twenty-one in the second, and twenty-four in the third), there is a conspicuous difference in the quality of the sounds. Thus there are only four hard gutturals (*c* and *g*) in the first stanza, and six in the second. These are combined with consonants so easily pronounced that the gutturals are woven into a smooth-flowing texture of sound. But consider the ten harsh consonants (the sound *ch* is included although it is not a guttural) of the third stanza. The humming *n*'s and *m*'s, the easy *l*'s and *r*'s, of the first two give place to such difficult enunciations as "salt-caked smoke-stack," "Road-rails," "pig-lead." And so Masefield has succeeded, in the very sound of his poem, in suggesting the same theme he has developed in imagery and rhythm.

The reader has undoubtedly noticed with what care we have avoided mentioning the terms "alliteration," "assonance," "consonance," and the like. We have felt that the use of these words has been based far too much on traditional conceptions of their character, and far too little on close study of vowel and consonant repetition as they actually occur.

The usual definition of "alliteration," for example, is the one to be found in Alden's excellent *Introduction to Poetry:* "repetition of initial consonants." Yet consider Browning's line:

> Lar*ch*-heart that *ch*ars to a *ch*alk-white glow.

Here *larch* is certainly tied to *chars* and *chalk* by the repetition of the *ch* sound. Many examples of different sorts of alliteration can be found easily. In the eight lines of Browning's stanza, for instance, there are five:

1. *Surface* alliteration: alliteration of stressed syllables

whether beginning or within words: *B*illets that *bl*aze; *d*eftly, *dr*y; *ch*ars to a *ch*alk-white; etc.

2. *Submerged* alliteration: alliteration of stressed with unstressed syllables, or of unstressed with one another: *B*illets that *bl*aze su*b*stantial.

3. *Crossed* alliteration: alliteration of two sets of letters so that one set is included within the other: *P*ine-stump split *d*eftly, *dr*y as *p*ith.

4. *Close* alliteration: alliteration of successive syllables or syllables separated by an interval of not more than one: *d*eftly, *dr*y; *s*ubstantial; *s*tump *s*plit; etc.

5. *Loose* alliteration: alliteration of syllables separated by two intervals or more, and often by much longer intervals: *b*avins . . . . *B*illets . . . . *bl*aze su*b*stantial; *b*ack . . . . *b*id; sa*pp*y; *P*ine-stum*p* s*p*lit . . . . *p*ith . . . . u*p* . . . . S*p*it . . . . lea*p* . . . . cla*p* . . . .[1]

Although we may point out this amazing display of echoing consonants in Browning's stanza, no analysis can really do justice to the infinite subtleties of its alliterative texture. But one's knowledge of their intricacy may be increased by copying the stanza and connecting all the similar consonant sounds with lines.

Besides the repetition of consonants in poems, we have repetition of vowels—the device known as "assonance." Usually, this is not so conspicuous as alliteration. The *a*'s of "L*a*rch-h*ea*rt that ch*a*rs to a ch*a*lk-white glow" are striking because of their association with the curious al-

[1] These five classes have been taken from Professor Rickert's analysis of the different kinds of alliteration, *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, p. 197. We have omitted a sixth sort—*Eye* alliteration: alliteration of letters only, the actual sounds being different—because Professor Rickert is not sure of its validity. The *t*'s of "subs*t*an*t*ial," the fourth word of Browning's second line, illustrate, however, what is meant by the term.

literation of *ch* already mentioned. The short *a* sounds of the first line are effective, also: "Good s*a*ppy b*a*vins th*a*t kindle forthwith"; and the short *i*'s of bav*i*ns . . . . k*i*ndle, . . . . w*i*th.

A third play of sound, consonance, is illustrated by such a line as Yeats's

> Nine bean rows will I *have* there, a *hive* for the honey bee,
> And live alone in the bee-*loud* g*lade*.

In the letters italicized the consonants remained the same but the vowels are changed. This is rarely used as a conscious means of producing a definite effect. Professor Rickert, however, quotes a most interesting poem of Wilfred Owen's. "The poet in this case chose consonance," she says, "instead of any other of the linking devices, to produce clashes of sound suggestive of the sounds of war:

> It seemed that out of the battle I e*scaped*
> Down some profound dull tunnel, long since *scooped*
> Through granites which Titanic wars had *groined*.
> Yet also there encumbered sleepers *groaned*,
> Too fast in thought or death to be be*stirred*.
> Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and *stared*
> With piteous recognition in fixed eye*s*
> Lifting distressful hands as if to ble*ss*."[1]

One more fact must be recognized before we try to trace all these uses of word sounds (that is, alliteration, assonance, and consonance) in their intricate interlacings and interweavings in a specific poem. This is the repetition of whole words or phrases; the return of one definite word sound again, so that it sets up an echo:

Yeats' "Lake Isle of Innisfree," from which we have already quoted two lines, begins:

[1] *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, p. 207.

I will arise *and go* now, *and go* to Innisfree,
*And* a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made . . . .

The second stanza begins with the same wavelike repetition, a kind of forward movement and return:

And I shall have some *peace* there, for *peace* comes *dropping* slow,
*Dropping* from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings.

Poetry is full of such uses of the same words or phrases for atmospheric effect.

Now let us examine the two stanzas from "Love in a Valley," already studied for rhythm, to see how Meredith makes use of these sound qualities. We must admit at once, of course, that any attempt to subject to analysis the finely-wrought sound texture of a good poem presents difficulties. Yet, like all our other attempts in this book, the very focus on the subject and our very concern with it lead us to see their presence and appreciate their subtlety This is the second stanza:

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirror'd winglets,
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

The nineteenth stanza runs:

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.

Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

The difference here is the much greater use of *sh* and *s* particularly the conspicuous *sw*, in the second stanza, and the comparatively restricted use of soft *n* and *m* sounds. In stanza 19, in addition, alliterations occur which are not present in stanza 2: for instance, although *d* occurs in stanza 2, it is not felt to be alliterative. In stanza 19 it forms a distinct alliteration. In stanza 19 *p* occurs eight times—often enough to be important; in stanza 2 only twice.

The difference in assonance is even more striking: note the dominant *ōō* sound in the nineteenth stanza, reinforced by other *o*'s very much like it in tone quality. There are thirteen of them, and only one in stanza 2. Consonance is not of importance here; but word and phrase repetition is a dominant feature.

All these differences show the same sort of thing we found true of the rhythm: Meredith, by his tone quality in the second stanza, suggests fleet, light, darting movement; in the nineteenth, the brooding peace of a hot midsummer noon.

What right have we to read into these word sounds any such suggestions? To answer this question we must enter hotly contested territory. Some deny that there can be any such thing as suggestion of theme through sound. Raymond Alden quotes the great skeptic on this point, Dr. Samuel Johnson: "Sound can resemble nothing but sound."[1] It is wholesome to keep this sensible remark in

[1] *An Introduction to Poetry*, p. 216.

mind when we are inclined to let our imaginative interpretations of tone quality run riot.

It is true that occasionally a poet deliberately imitates a natural sound. We call this "onomatopoeia." When Shakespeare says:

> Hark, hark!
> Bow-wow.
> The watch-dogs bark!
> Bow-wow.
> Hark, hark! I hear
> The strain of strutting chanticleer
> Cry, "Cock-a-diddle-dow."

we are justified in thinking he is "representing descriptively the sounds of experience," so far as dogs' and cocks' voices are concerned. But acute students of poetry are more and more cautious about admitting any loose claims to onomatopoetic writing. "Sound can resemble nothing but sound," except when the poet without question makes it resemble something more: "Bow-wow," "Cock-a-diddle-dow." There is a great difference, however, between actual representation of sound, onomatopoeia, and the strange, almost miraculous, power of sound to suggest the most extraordinary ranges of emotional experience. Alden says, "Nothing is more obvious and more important than the power of sound to suggest color, movement, and mood, . . . . the effect of the sound quality is not to convey definite ideas, but to fit itself to those involved in the meaning or the mood of the passage."[1] This is why we are justified in stating that Masefield has succeeded, in the sound-qualities of the three stanzas of "Cargoes," in "suggesting the same theme he has developed in imagery and rhythm";

[1] Pp. 216–17.

that the horror of "The Heretic's Burning" comes to us with Browning's repetition of *ch;* and that Meredith is suggesting his lovely heroine in the darting swiftness of the sounds in the second stanza of "Love in a Valley."

The study of sound qualities is very nearly the most interesting of all the technical phases of the study of poetry. It is probably the most misunderstood. Yet from its clear apprehension develop the imaginative faculties which a deep and growing love of poetry brings to men and women. The sound of words on the tongue, their strangeness and delightfulness, is possibly an early recollection in all our childhoods. There is Dorothy Aldis' jingle:

"Blum" is a word
That very few
Have ever heard

I like to say it,
"Blum, blum, blum"—
I do it loud
Or in a hum . . . . . .

Now there is no gainsaying that poets are persons who love these words that "few have ever heard."

Then join our leaping lines that *scumfish* through the pines, sings Kipling's "Bandar-Log," and dull would he be of soul who could fail to grasp the meaning of exactly how the scumfishing should be done.

In just the same way, Chaucer's flight through the air to the *Hous of Fame* starts off with words that give the notion of his terrifying, grotesque experience:

Me thoughte I saw an egle sorė[1] . . . .
And somwhat dounward gan hit lighte . . . . ,

[1] soar.

when, to his utter astonishment,

> . . . . with his grimmè pawès strongë,
> Within his sharpè naylès longè,
> Me, fleinge, at a swappe he hentè,[1]
> And with his sours[2] agayn up wentè,
> Me caryinge in his clawès starkè[3]
> As lightly as I were a larkë. . . . .

Every real poem has something of this imaginative sound-quality; and if we miss it, a good deal of the poem passes us by.

> The splendor falls on castlè walls
> And snowy summits old in story:
> The long light shakes across the lakes,
> And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
> Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
> Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

However heartily one may agree with those who deny actual onomatopoeia in such a stanza as this of Tennyson's, there is no doubt of rich and full sound-suggestion. One of the greatest masters of this element in English verse is John Milton. His work reveals an exquisite union of sound and meaning which draws the lover of poetry to him again and again. There is the early morning shower in "Il Penseroso":

> When the gust hath blown his fill,
> Ending on the rustling leaves,
> With minute-drops from off the eaves . . . .

in which the delicate deliberation of consonants and vowels brings up an experience we all must have known—exactly the sound of a soft spring shower as it tapers off. But one

[1] seized. [2] soars. [3] strong.

of the most remarkable passages in Milton is the great scene near the end of *Paradise Lost* when Satan returns to Hell with the announcement of his success. As the Fallen Spirits listen, they are suddenly changed to serpents, and a false Tree of Knowledge rises before them, laden with apples:

> greedily they pluck'd
> The Fruitage fair to sight . . . .
> . . . . they, fondly thinking to allay
> Their appetite with gust, instead of Fruit
> Chew'd bitter Ashes, which th' offended taste
> With spattering noise rejected; oft they assay'd,
> Hunger and thirst constraining, drugg'd as oft,
> With hatefullest disrelish writh'd their jaws
> With soot and cinders fill'd.

Here, says Abercrombie, "Milton, as he alone could, electrifies the lines . . . . with a perfect frenzy of infuriated disgust: and a good half of the passion is conveyed by the mere *sound* of his words."[1]

But although it is seldom we find sound-suggestion so explicit and dramatic as in these examples, it is an element never to be overlooked:

> Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
> Enwrought with golden and silver light,
> The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
> Of night and light and the half light,
> I would spread the cloths under your feet:
> But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
> I have spread my dreams under your feet;
> Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.
>
> —*William Butler Yeats*, "He wishes for the Clothes of Heaven"

[1] *The Theory of Poetry* (1926) p. 127.

It is an easy matter to point out the technical beauty of repetition of vowel and consonant, of variations of long *i* sounds with long *ee*'s, and the charm of the alternations of long and short words. But leading out from these matters, far from enumerations of vowels and consonants, are the suggestions of splendid and glorious tribute which sink to insignificance before the poet's love. Simply to attempt to restate his meaning in prose proves the power of the sound of words in poetry.

# CHAPTER IV

## INTERESTING PAGES

### THE PILLAR OF FAME

Fame's pillar here at last we set,
Outduring marble, brass, or jet:
  Charm'd and enchanted so
  As to withstand the blow
    Of o v e r throw:
    Nor shall the seas,
    Or o u t r a g e s
    Of storms o'erbear
    What we up-rear:
    Tho' Kingdoms fall,
  This pillar never shall
  Decline or waste at all;
But stand forever by his own
Firm and well-fixed foundation.

—Robert Herrick

Do you find the unconventional arrangement of the lines of Herrick's poem interesting? Do you think that it affects your interest in the content? The author was not indulging in a bit of poetic exercise. More than one of the religious poets of the seventeenth century used the device of arranging the lines of their verse in a pattern symbolical of its content. Emblem poetry, indeed, dates back to medieval times. Not only does the device present the theme of the poem with double force; it arrests attention through its unconventional form. The startling effects which some of these poems produce are well illustrated in the examples given here chosen from the poems of George

Herbert and Christopher Harvey. The first, "Easter Wings," is a genuine emblem:

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he become
Most poor:
With thee
Oh let me rise
As Larks harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

—George Herbert

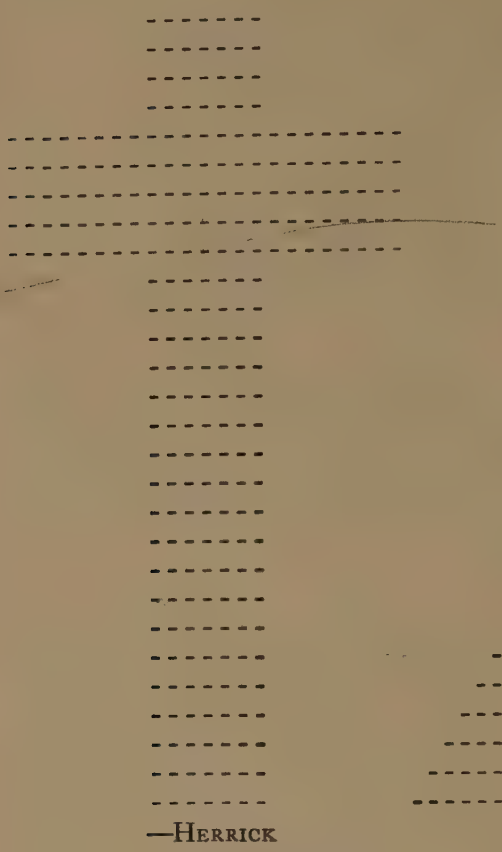
The second of these examples, "The Sabbath or Lord's Day," while not actually an emblem poem, represents an imitation of Herbert's experiments in securing striking designs. Quite as unusual as the pattern of the lines is the novel rhyme scheme.

Hail
Holy
King of Days,
The E m p e r o r,
Or u n i v e r s a l
Monarch of Time, the week's
Perpetual Dictator.
Thy
Beauty
Far exceeds
The reach of art,
To blazon f u l l y;
And I thy light e c l i p s e,
When I most strive to raise thee.

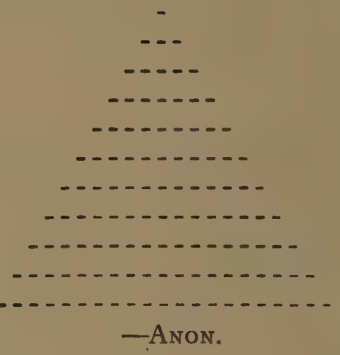
Vail
Wholly
To thy praise,
For e v e r more
Must the r e h e a r s a l
Of all, that honour seeks,
Under the world's Creator.
My
Duty
Yet must needs
Yield thee mine heart,
And that not d u l l y:
Spirits of souls, not lips
Alone, are fit to praise thee.

—Christopher Harvey

The patterns below were employed by some of the emblem poets. What sort of themes do they suggest?



—Herrick



—Anon.

There is much more than manipulation of type in these poems. If you read them over carefully, you will observe that the entire rhythmical pattern is governed by the enforced variation of the line lengths. In the same way the sound effects, particularly rhymes, are influenced by the

patterns. Perhaps such verses will always remain curiosities, but they suggest at once to us the importance of the appeal which a poem makes to our eyes. Poets have never been unaware of this; and in an age as definitely experimental as our own, they have achieved some unusual effects. That visual attractiveness is genuinely a problem of style is a fact which students of literature are only beginning to recognize.[1] The study of the relation of the appearance of the printed page to the stylistic character of its content offers interesting possibilities. To some extent even such matters as size of page and type, margins—all details that enter into the composition of a book are involved. Usually such matters are less the concern of the author than of the printer. Of more importance, however, are such matters as paragraphing, indentation, word and line spacing, length of line, use of capitals and punctuation. These are problems which affect the attractiveness of a page to the eye quite as quickly as its format, but they are matters which are determined by the author. As we shall see, the effect of a poem can be completely altered by merely changing the length of the lines or omitting the indentation of the lines. All this does not mean to imply that the poets set about methodically to arrange their lines in designs that will capture the attention of the reader by the eccentricity of the completed poem. It does imply that the poets may purposely arrange their words or their lines in such a manner that the result, as it meets *the eye*, will interpret more fully the content and form of a poem.

[1] An interesting study of the relation of visual devices to the problems of style will be found in Professor Rickert's book *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, pp. 240 ff.

The indentation of the alternating lines of verse may seem one of the most trivial conventions of poetry. The significance of this convention will be seen only when the same stanza of a poem is written both with and without its proper indentation. The stanza from Herrick's poem "To Blossoms" admirably illustrates the point:

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past
But you may stay yet here awhile
To blush and gently smile;
And go at last.

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past
But you may stay yet here awhile
To blush and gently smile;
And go at last.

Not only does the first method present a more pleasing appearance; the balanced structure of the lines is immediately apparent. It is evident that one cannot read the second arrangement with the same effect produced by the first. That this form is dictated by the very content of the poem can be more readily seen in comparing the effects of Carl Sandburg's poem "Grass" with and without the indentation which the author uses.

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

If we omit Sandburg's indentation and paragraphing, the poem appears in the following manner:

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.
And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?
I am the grass.
Let me work.

Only by such a comparison do we realize how essential the author's form is to the full interpretation of the poem. By means of his indentation, the line, "I am the grass; I cover all," strikes us at once as a refrain or response set apart from the first stanza. Likewise the words of the passengers produce the same effect in the second paragraph. It is absolutely necessary that the last two lines stand in a paragraph by themselves, else the unifying strain that unites the whole poem is lost.

It will be interesting to study the two methods employed in printing the following poem of Humbert Wolfe's. Which do you think is the more effective? You will find the poem reprinted in this book on page 118; but before you turn to it, try to decide which form you think the author used. What are your reasons for your decision?

THRUSHES

The City Financier walks in the gardens,
Stiffly, because of his pride and his burdens.

The daisies, looking up, observe
Only a self-respecting curve.

The thrushes only see a flat
Table-land of shiny hat.

He looks importantly about him,
While all the spring goes on without him.

THRUSHES

The City Financier
walks in the gardens,
stiffly, because of
his pride and his burdens

The daisies, looking
up, observe
only a self-
respecting curve.

The thrushes only
see a flat
table-land
of shiny hat.

He looks importantly
about him,
while all the spring
goes on without him.

Experiments of this sort can be continued with the work of several of the poets. Modern poets have broken many of the old traditions governing paragraphing and capitalization. Some of them have entirely disregarded the conventional usage of capitalization and punctuation. Mr. E. E. Cummings has been chief among this latter group. Notice the placing of the punctuation marks, as well as the peculiar stanza arrangement, of the following poem also by Humbert Wolfe:

## THE GREY SQUIRREL

Like a small grey
coffee-pot,
sits the squirrel.
He is not

all he should be,
kills by dozens
trees, and eats
his red-brown cousins.

The keeper, on the
other hand
, who shot him, is
a Christian, and

loves his enemies,
which shows
the squirrel was not
one of those.

Can you explain the author's peculiar use of the comma in the third stanza? This poem might be written in couplets instead of quatrains, and the stanza divisions might be omitted. Write it that way and make a note of the effect which such an arrangement produces.

Free verse affords opportunities for poets to secure varied patterns and arrangements of lines in their poems. It must not be supposed, however, that free verse allows hit-or-miss arrangement. It is no more lacking in form than the more conventional forms of metrical verse. Variety, however, is greater, and each poem creates its own pattern, which is determined chiefly by the thought of the poem. The following lines from a poem of Alfred Kreymborg's, "The Peasant" serve to demonstrate the novel line arrangement of free verse:

Should you strike him
with a question,
he will blink twice or thrice
and roll his head about,
like an owl
in the pin-pricks
of a dawn he cannot see.
There is mighty little flesh
about his bones,
there is no gusto
in his stride.

Compare this with Amy Lowell's poem "Dolphins in Blue Water:"

Hey! Crackerjack—jump!
Blue water,
Pink water,
Swirl, flick, flitter;
Snout into a wave trough,
Plunge, curl.
Blow over,
Under,
Razor-cut and tumble.
Roll, turn—
Straight—and shoot at the sky,
All rose-flame drippings,
Down ring,
Drop,
Nose under,
Hoop,
Tail,
Dive,
And gone;
With smooth over-swirlings of blue water,
Oil-smooth cobalt,
Slipping, liquid lapis lazuli,
Emerald shadings,
Tinting of pinks and ochre.
Prismatic slidings
Underneath a windy sky.

Nothing could better illustrate the significance of the visual attractiveness of a poem. By its arrangement Miss Lowell has made each image stand clear before the eye. The entire poem moves with kaleidoscopic swiftness, yet every detail of one vast image is distinct. This is achieved because each image or each detail of the whole meets the eye separately. In quite the same way, each new idea in the characterization of the peasant is registered distinctly on the mind through its contact with the eye of the reader by Kreymborg's arrangement of the lines.

The opening paragraph of Shelley's "Alastor" is printed here in blank verse and in the manner of free verse. It will be seen that the two forms appear to be different poems, so different in the effect each makes upon the eye, and subsequently on the mind:

Earth, ocean, air, belovèd brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, belovèd brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Earth,
Ocean,
Air,

Belovèd brotherhood!
If our great Mother
Has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety
To feel your love,
And recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn,
And odorous noon.
And even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs
In the sere wood,
And winter
Robing with pure snow
And crowns of starry ice
The grey grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous pantings
When she breathes
Her first sweet kisses,
Have been dear to me;
If no bright bird,
Insect,
Or gentle beast,
I consciously have injured,
But still loved and cherished these
My kindred;
Then forgive this boast,
Belovèd brethren,
And withdraw no portion
Of your wonted favour
Now!

The rearrangement of the lines alters completely the rhythm of the poem, by the introduction of a different system of stresses. The measured cadence created by alternating accented and unaccented syllables, which is the basis of blank verse rhythm, is replaced by a cadence founded upon speech units, which is the basis of free verse.

Another device which attracts attention is secured through unconventional spacing of words within a line, such as Vachel Lindsay uses in the fragment quoted from "The Haughty Snail King":

> This king-snail said: "I feel a thought
> Within. . . . It blossoms soon. . . .
> O little courtiers of mine, . . .
> I crave a pretty boon. . . .
> Oh, yes . . . (High thoughts with effort come
> And well-bred snails are ALMOST dumb.)
> "I wish I had a yellow crown
> As glistering . . . as . . . the moon."

What is the effect of the intervals marked by the dots? The eye quickly aids us in establishing the rhythmical pattern, since the dots suggest the pauses essential to achieve the desired effect. It should be noted here that Mr. Lindsay's poetry is among the most interesting of the work of modern poets in the varied patterns he employs in printing his poems. Since he is an artist as well as a poet, he is readily aware of the significance of poetry's appeal to the eye. Many of his longer poems, too long to be reproduced here, present striking visual effects.

The conclusion to be drawn from the several illustrations presented in this section is simply this: the poet is interested not merely in giving expression to his ideas and his emotions; he is concerned with presenting them to his reader in such a way that they make the greatest possible appeal to the reader. He is aware that the eye as well as the ear helps to establish rhythmical patterns and images, and he strives to present his art so that, if he desires, he may have the services of these visual aids. While poetry is not a pictorial or plastic art, nevertheless it must reach

the reader through the eye. The modern poet, though not the first to discover this truth, has gone farther in exploiting its possibilities. We live in an age that has been taught to grasp complex ideas and events in the flash of an eye. The day's news is summed up in a line that forces itself upon the eye of the strap-hanger. Placard and billboard, shop window and sky-sign are employed today as never before. It is characteristic of an age that has discovered the influence of visual attractiveness upon our intellectual and emotional responses. Poetry is taking advantage of this discovery.

# PART II
# ADVENTURES IN DISCOVERY

The following groups of poems have been included, not as an anthology, but as an interesting field for explorations in various phases of poetic art. We have tried to cover a very wide range of territory; and the reader will be rewarded, we hope, with many a delightful discovery from every period of English poetry, from the blithe humanity of Geoffrey Chaucer to the brilliant virtuosity of Edith Sitwell.

There has been an attempt, also, to bring together widely different poems on the same theme. Walter de la Mare's "Silver" and John V. A. Weaver's "Moonlight" are excellent studies in contrast. Actually to chart Milton's, Meredith's, and Vaughan's images of the universe is to see at a glance the magnificence of the Miltonic conception, its superb development by the modern poet, and, the suggestion of illimitable space made on the seventeenth-century poet Vaughan by the recently accepted Copernican theory.

But these are only two suggestions as to the countless ways in which a careful and sympathetic study of these poems can be made to yield a rich harvest. To approach them with a hospitable mind, a willingness to accept the poet's purpose, and an eagerness to follow him into his particular region of the boundless land of poetry is to enter with a promise of sure success into these "Adventures in Discovery."

# I

# THE WORLD OF WATERS, WINDS, AND WEATHERS

*Thou on whose stream the steep sky's commotion,*
*Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,*
*Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,*
*Angels of rain and lightning . . . . .*

—SHELLEY

## EXILED

Searching my heart for its true sorrow,
This is the thing I find to be:
That I am weary of words and people,
Sick of the city, wanting the sea;

Wanting the sticky, salty sweetness
Of the strong wind and shattered spray;
Wanting the loud sound and the soft sound
Of the big surf that breaks all day.

Always before about my dooryard,
Marking the reach of the winter sea,
Rooted in sand and dragging drift-wood,
Straggled the purple wild sweet-pea;

Always I climbed the wave at morning,
Shook the sand from my shoes at night,
That now am caught beneath great buildings,
Stricken with noise, confused with light.

If I could hear the green piles groaning
Under the windy wooden piers,
See once again the bobbing barrels,
And the black sticks that fence the weirs,

If I could see the weedy mussels
Crusting the wrecked and rotting hulls,
Hear once again the hungry crying
Overhead, of the wheeling gulls,

Feel once again the shanty straining
  Under the turning of the tide,
Fear once again the rising freshet,
  Dread the bell in the fog outside,—

I should be happy,—that was happy
  All day long on the coast of Maine!
I have a need to hold and handle
  Shells and anchors and ships again!

I should be happy, that am happy
  Never at all since I came here.
I am too long away from water.
  I have a need of water near.

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

## OREAD

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines.
Splash your great pines
On our rocks.
Hurl your green over us—
Cover us with your pools of fir.

—"H. D."

## A PASSER-BY

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
  Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,
  Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
  Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
  Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven sleep, thy white sails furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest,
  Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air:
I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest,
  And anchor queen of the strange shipping there,
  Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare:
Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-capp'd grandest
  Peak, that is over the feathery palms, more fair
Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhail'd and nameless,
  I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine
That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,
  Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.
  But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is thine,
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,
  From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.

—Robert Bridges

## NOW STRIKE YOUR SAILES, YE JOLLY MARINERS

Now strike your sailes, ye jolly Mariners,
For we be come into a quiet rode,
Where we must land some of our passengers,
And light this wearie vessell of her lode.
Here she awhile may make safe abode,
Till she repaired have her tackles spent,
And wants supplide. And then again abroad
On the long voyage whereto she is bent:
Well may she speede, and fairely finish her intent.

—Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene*,
End of Book I, Canto XII

## THE OLD SHIPS

I have seen old ships sail like swans asleep
Beyond the village which men still call Tyre,
With leaden age o'ercargoed, dipping deep
For Famagusta and the hidden sun
That rings black Cyprus with a lake of fire;

And all those ships were certainly so old—
Who knows how oft with squat and noisy gun,
Questing brown slaves or Syrian oranges,
The pirate Genoese
Hell-raked them till they rolled
Blood, water, fruit and corpses up the hold.
But now through friendly seas they softly run,
Painted the mid-sea blue or shore-sea green,
Still patterned with the vine and grapes in gold.

But I have seen,
Pointing her shapely shadows from the dawn
And image tumbled on a rose-swept bay,
A drowsy ship of some yet older day;
And, wonder's breath indrawn,
Thought I—who knows—who knows—but in that same
(Fished up beyond Aeaea, patched up new
—Stern painted brighter blue—)
That talkative bald-headed seaman came
(Twelve patient comrades sweating at the oar)
From Troy's doom-crimson shore,
And with great lies about his wooden horse
Set the crew laughing, and forgot his course.

It was so old a ship—who knows, who knows?
—And yet so beautiful, I watched in vain
To see the mast burst open with a rose,
And the whole deck put on its leaves again.

—James Elroy Flecker

## WATER

The world turns softly
Not to spill its lakes and rivers.
The water is held in its arms
And the sky is held in the water.
What is water,
That pours silver,
And can hold the sky?

—Hilda Conkling

## FOG

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

—Carl Sandburg

## THE YELLOW FOG

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

—T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

## MONOTONE

The monotone of the rain is beautiful,
And the sudden rise and slow relapse
Of the long multitudinous rain.

The sun on the hills is beautiful,
Or a captured sunset sea-flung,
Bannered with fire and gold.

A face I know is beautiful—
With fire and gold of sky and sea,
And the peace of long warm rain.

—Carl Sandburg

## WEATHERS

This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
And so do I;
When showers benumble the chestnut spikes,
And nestling fly;

And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
And they sit outside the "Traveller's Rest,"
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
And citizens dream of the South and West,
And so do I.

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,
And so do I;
When beeches drip in browns and duns,
And thresh, and ply;
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,
And meadow rivulets overflow,
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,
And rooks in families homeward go,
And so do I.

—Thomas Hardy

## THE WIND IS BLIND

"*Eyeless, in Gaza, at the mill, with slaves*"
—Milton's *Samson*

The wind is blind.
The earth sees sun and moon; the height
Is watch-tower to the dawn; the plain
Shines to the summer; visible light
Is scattered in the drops of rain.

The wind is blind.
The flashing billows are aware;
With open eyes the cities see;
Light leaves the ether, everywhere
Known to the homing bird and bee

The wind is blind,
Is blind alone. How has he hurled
His ignorant lash, his aimless dart,
His eyeless rush upon the world,
Unseeing, to break his unknown heart!

The wind is blind,
And the sail traps him, and the mill
Captures him; and he cannot save
His swiftness and his desperate will
From those blind uses of the slave.

—Alice Meynell

## SILVER

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws and a silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

—Walter de la Mare

## MOONLIGHT

Say—listen—
If you could only take a bath in moonlight!

Hey! Can't you just see yourself
Take a runnin' dive
Inta a pool o' glowin' blue,
Feel it glidin' over you
All aroun' and inta you—

Grab a star—huh?—
Use it for soap;
Beat it up to bubbles
And white sparklin' foam—
Roll and swash—

Gee!

I just like to bet
You could wash your soul clean
In moonlight!

—John V. A. Weaver

## TO A SNOWFLAKE

What heart could have thought you?—
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapour?—
"God was my shaper.
Passing surmisal,
He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapour,
To lust of his mind:—
Thou couldst not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost."

—Francis Thompson

## LONDON SNOW

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
  Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down;
  Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;

Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;
The ear harkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling;
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snow-balling;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
"O look at the trees!" they cried. "O look at the trees!"
With lessened load, a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asunder:
When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm
they have broken.

—Robert Bridges

## VELVET SHOES

Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
  And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
  More beautiful
  Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
  In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
  Upon silver fleece,
  Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
  Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
  On white silence below.
  We shall walk in the snow.

—Elinor Wylie

## II

# THE MAGIC OF THE EARTH

*Oh world, I cannot hold thee close enough*—MILLAY

### REVEILLE

Wake: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
"Who 'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: When the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

—A. E. HOUSMAN

## THE FRESH AIR

The fresh air moves like water round a boat.
The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.
The whining, wavering plover flap and float.
That crow is flying after that cuckoo.
Look! Look!.... They're gone. What are the great trees calling?
Just come a little farther, by that edge
Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling
Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.
Oh, what a lovely bank! Give me your hand.
Lie down and press your heart against the ground.
Let us both listen till we understand,
Each through the other, every natural sound ....
I can't hear anything to-day, can you,
But, far and near: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"?

—Harold Monro

## GRASS

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

—Carl Sandburg

## OVER THE ROOF-TOPS RACE THE SHADOWS OF CLOUDS

### I

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades,
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun broidered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

### II

Flickering of incessant rain
On flashing pavements:
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.
The winds come clanging and clattering
From long white highroads whipping in ribbons up summits:
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-blossom,
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.

Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain
Dripping from the eaves.

### III

The trees, like great jade elephants,
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants:
The clouds are their crimson howdah-canopies,
The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah.
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those trees.

IV

O seeded grass, you army of little men
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of steel:
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of Earth,
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,
And do not let me go:
For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,
The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,—
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colorless, unreal,
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

V

The morning is clean and blue and the wind blows up the clouds:
Now my thoughts gathered from afar
Once again in their patched armour, with rusty plumes and
blunted swords,
Move out to war.

Smoking our morning pipes we shall ride two and two
Through the woods,
For our old cause keeps us together,
And our hatred is so precious not death or defeat can break it.

God willing, we shall this day meet that old enemy
Who has given us so many a good beating.
Thank God we have a cause worth fighting for,
And a cause worth losing and a good song to sing.

—John Gould Fletcher, "Irradiations"

## I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
  And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
  Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
  Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
  In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
  In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
  Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

—William Wordsworth

## TO DAFFODILS

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
  You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
  Has not attain'd his noon.
    Stay, stay
  Until the lasting day
    Has run
  But to the even-song;
And, having pray'd together, we
    Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
  We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,

As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

—Robert Herrick

## A GARDEN

Written after the Civil Wars

See how the flowers, as at parade,
Under their colours stand display'd:
Each regiment in order grows,
That of the tulip, pink, and rose.
But when the vigilant patrol
Of stars walks round about the pole,
Their leaves, that to the stalks are curl'd
Seem to their staves the ensigns furl'd.
Then in some flower's belovèd hut
Each bee, as sentinel, is shut,
And sleeps so too; but if once stirr'd,
She runs you through, nor asks the word.
O thou, that dear and happy Isle,
The garden of the world erewhile,
Thou Paradise of the four seas
Which Heaven planted us to please,
But, to exclude the world, did guard
With wat'ry if not flaming sword;
What luckless apple did we taste
To make us mortal and thee waste!
Unhappy! shall we never more
That sweet militia restore,
When gardens only had their towers,
And all the garrisons were flowers;
When roses only arms might bear,
And men did rosy garlands wear?

—Andrew Marvell

## BIRCHES

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the line of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground,
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.

Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
*Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

—Robert Frost

## THE SOUND OF TREES

I wonder about the trees.
Why do we wish to bear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place?
We suffer them by the day
Till we lose all measure of pace,
And fixity in our joys,
And acquire a listening air.
They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;
And that talks no less for knowing,
As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder

Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

—Robert Frost

## IN THE FIELDS

Lord, when I look at lovely things which pass,
Under old trees the shadow of young leaves
Dancing to please the wind along the grass,
Or the gold stillness of the August sun on the August sheaves;
Can I believe there is a heavenlier world than this?
And if there is
Will the strange heart of any everlasting thing
Bring me these dreams that take my breath away?
They come at evening with the home-flying rooks and the scent of hay,
Over the fields. They come in Spring.

—Charlotte Mew

## PIED BEAUTY

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies as couple-coloured as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscapes plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise Him.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

## WHAN COMEN IS THE MAY

. . . . And as for me, thogh that I can but lyte,[1]
On bokés for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem yeve[2] I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertély, that there is gamé noon
That fro my bokés maketh me to goon,
But hit be seldom, on the holyday;
Save, certeynly, whan that the month of May
Is comen, and that I here the foulés[3] singe,
And that the flourés ginnen for to springe,
Farewel my book, amd my devocioun!
Now have I than swich[4] a condicioun,
That, of alle the flourés in the mede,
Than love I most these flourés whyte and rede,
Swiche as men callen daysies in our toun.
To hem have I so greet affeccioun,
As I seyde erst, whan comen is the May,
That in my bed ther daweth[5] me no day
That I nam up, and walking in the mede
To seen this flour agein the sonné sprede,
Whan hit upryseth erly by the morwe;
That blisful sighté softneth al my sorwé[6] . . . .
And whan that hit is eve, I renne blyve,[7]
As sone as ever the sonne ginneth weste,
To seen this flour, how it wol go to reste,
For fere of night, so hateth she derknesse!
Hir chere[8] is pleynly sprad in the brightnesse
Of the sonne, for ther hit wol unclose.
Allas! that I ne had English, ryme or prose,
Suffisant this flour to preyse aright!

—Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, The Prologue

[1] know but little.
[2] give.
[3] birds.
[4] such.
[5] dawneth.
[6] sorrow.
[7] run quickly.
[8] countenance.

## HEAT

O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air—
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut through this heat—
plow through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

—"H. D."

## SCYTHE SONG

Mowers, weary and brown and blithe,
  What is the word, methinks, ye know,
Endless over-word that the Scythe
  Sings to the blades of the grass below?
Scythes that swing in the grass and clover,
  Something, still, they say as they pass;
What is the word that, over and over,
  Sings the Scythe to the flowers and grass?

*Hush, ah, hush*, the Scythes are saying,
  *Hush, and heed not, and fall asleep;*
*Hush*, they say to the grasses swaying;
  *Hush*, they sing to the clover deep!
*Hush*—'tis the lullaby Time is singing—
  *Hush, and heed not, for all things pass;*
*Hush, ah, hush*, and the Scythes are swinging
  Over the clover, over the grass!

—Andrew Lang

## TO AUTUMN

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit and vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from the garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

—John Keats

## HOT CAKES

Winter has come; fierce is the cold;
In the sharp morning air new-risen we meet.
Rheum freezes in the nose;
Frost hangs about the chin.
For hollow bellies, for chattering teeth and knees shivering
What better than a hot cake?
Soft as the down of spring,
Whiter than autumn wool!
Dense and swift the steam
Rises, swells, and spreads.
Fragrance flies through the air,
Is scattered far and wide,
Steals down along the wind, and wets
The covetous mouth of passer-by.
Servants and grooms
Throw sidelong glances, munch the empty air;
They lick their lips who serve;
While lines of envious lackeys by the wall
Stand dryly swallowing.

Translated from Shu Hsi, a Chinese poet of the third century after Christ.

—Arthur Waley

## THE MOST-SACRED MOUNTAIN

Space and the twelve clean winds of heaven,
And this sharp exultation, like a cry, after the slow
six thousand steps of climbing!
This is Tai Shan, the beautiful, the most holy.

Below my feet the foot-hills nestle, brown with flecks of
green; and lower down the flat brown plain, the
floor of earth stretches away to blue infinity.
Beside me in this airy space the temple roofs cut their
slow curves against the sky,
And one black bird circles above the void.

Space, and the twelve clean winds are here;
And with them broods eternity—a swift, white peace,
a presence manifest.
The rhythm ceases here. Time has no place. This is
the end that has no end.

Here, when Confucius came, a half a thousand years
before the Nazarene, he stepped, with me, thus
into timelessness.
The stone beside us waxes old, the carven stone that
says: "On this spot once Confucius stood and
felt the smallness of the world below."

The stone grows old:
Eternity is not for stones.
But I shall go down from this airy place, this swift white
peace, this stinging exultation;
And time will close about me, and my soul stir to the
rhythm of the daily round.
Yet, having known, life will not press so close,
and always I shall feel time ravel thin about me;
For once I stood
In the white windy presence of eternity.

—Eunice Tietjens

## III

# FEATHER, FIN, AND FUR

*Of founes, soures, bukkes, doës*
*Was full the wode, and many roës,*
*And many squirelles, that sete*
*Ful hye upon the trees, and ete,*
*And in hir maner made festes.*

—Chaucer

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## DOLPHINS IN BLUE WATER

Hey! Crackerjack—jump!
Blue water,
Pink water,
Swirl, flick, flitter;
Snout into a wave-trough,
Plunge, curl.
Bow over,
Under,
Razor-cut and tumble.
Roll, turn—
Straight—and shoot at the sky,
All rose-flame drippings.
Down ring,
Drop,
Nose under,
Hoop,
Tail,
Dive,
And gone;
With smooth over-swirlings of blue water,
Oil-smooth cobalt,
Slipping, liquid lapis lazuli,
Emerald shadings,
Tintings of pink and ochre.
Prismatic slidings
Underneath a windy sky.

—Amy Lowell

## JARRING THE AIR WITH RUMOUR COOL

Jarring the air with rumour cool,
Small fountains played into a pool
With sound as soft as the barley's hiss
When its beard just sprouting is;
Whence a young stream, that trod on moss,
Prettily rimpled the court across.
And in the pool's clear idleness,
Moving like dreams through happiness,
Shoals of small bright fishes were;
In and out weed-thickets bent
Perch and carp, and sauntering went
With mounching jaws and eyes a-stare;
Or on a lotus leaf would crawl
A brinded loach to bask and sprawl,
Tasting the warm sun ere it dipt
Into the water; but quick as fear
Back his shining brown head slipt
To crouch on the gravel of his lair,
Where the cooled sunbeams broke in wrack,
Spilt shatter'd gold about his back.

—Lascelles Abercrombie, "Epilogue"

## SUMMER EVENING

The sandy cat by the Farmer's chair
Mews at his knee for dainty fare;
Old Rover in his moss-greened house
Mumbles a bone, and barks at a mouse;
In the dewy fields the cattle lie
Chewing a cud 'neath a fading sky;
Dobbin at manger pulls his hay;
Gone is another summer's day.

—Walter de la Mare

## MILK FOR THE CAT

When the tea is brought at five o'clock,
And all the neat curtains are drawn with care,
The little black cat with bright green eyes
Is suddenly purring there.

At first she pretends, having nothing to do,
She has come in merely to blink by the grate,
But, though tea may be late or the milk may be sour,
She is never late.

And presently her agate eyes
Take a soft large milky haze,
And her independent casual glance
Becomes a stiff, hard gaze.

Then she stamps her claws or lifts her ears,
Or twists her tail and begins to stir,
Till suddenly all her lithe body becomes
One breathing, trembling purr.

The children eat and wriggle and laugh,
The two old ladies stroke their silk:
But the cat is grown small and thin with desire,
Transformed to a creeping lust for milk.

The white saucer like some full moon descends
At last from the clouds of the table above;
She sighs and dreams and thrills and glows,
Transfigured with love.

She nestles over the shining rim,
Buries her chin in the creamy sea;
Her tail hangs loose; each drowsy paw
Is doubled under each bending knee.

A long, dim ecstasy holds her life;
Her world is an infinite shapeless white,
Till her tongue has curled the last holy drop,
Then she sinks back into the night.

Draws and dips her body to heap
Her sleepy nerves in the great arm-chair,
Lies defeated and buried deep
Three or four hours unconscious there.

—Harold Monro

## THE TIGER

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

—William Blake

## THE TWELVE OXEN

I have twelfé oxen that be faire and brown,
And they go a grasing down by the town.
With hey! with how! with hoy!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfė oxen, and they be faire and white,
And they go a grasing down by the dyke.
With hey! with how! with hoy!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfė oxen, and they be faire and blak,
And they go a grasing down by the lake.
With hey! with how! with hoy!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfė oxen, and they be faire and rede,
And they go a grasing down by the mede
With hey! with how! with hoy!
Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

—Traditional English

## THE FLOWER-FED BUFFALOES

The flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
In the days of long ago,
Ranged where the locomotives sing
And the prairie flowers lie low;
The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass
Is swept away by wheat,
Wheels and wheels and wheels spin by
In the spring that still is sweet.
But the flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
Left us long ago.
They gore no more, they bellow no more,
They trundle around the hills no more:—
With the Blackfeet lying low,
With the Pawnees lying low.

—Vachel Lindsay

## THE RUNAWAY

Once when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, "Whose colt?"
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head
And snorted at us. And then he had to bolt.
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled,

And we saw him, or thought we saw him, dim and grey,
Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.
"I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.
He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes,
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know!
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."
And now he comes again with clatter of stone,
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.
"Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and take him in."

—Robert Frost

## THE WASP

Where the ripe pears droop heavily
The yellow wasp hums loud and long
His hot and drowsy autumn song:
A yellow flame he seems to be,
When darting suddenly from high
He lights where fallen peaches lie.

Yellow and black, this tiny thing's
A tiger-soul on elfin wings.

—William Sharp

## I HAD A DOVE

I had a dove and the sweet dove died;
And I have thought it died of grieving:
O what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving;
Sweet little red feet! why should you die—
Why should you leave me, sweet bird! why?
You liv'd alone in the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing! would you not live with me?
I kissed you oft and gave you white peas;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

—John Keats

## THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

## THE EAGLE AND THE MOLE

Avoid the reeking herd,
Shun the polluted flock,
Live like that stoic bird,
The eagle of the rock.

The huddled warmth of crowds
Begets and fosters hate;
He keeps, above the clouds,
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,
And herds to shelter run,
He sails above the storm,
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track
Your sinews cannot leap,
Avoid the lathered pack,
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul
From spotted sight or sound,
Live like the velvet mole;
Go burrow underground.

And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stones,
With rivers at their source,
And disembodied bones.

—Elinor Wylie

## SPRING, THE SWEET SPRING

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king.
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
*Cuckoo, jug, jug, pu we, to witta woo!*

The Palm and May make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
*Cuckoo, jug, jug, pu we, to witta woo!*

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
*Cuckoo, jug, jug, pu we, to witta woo!*
*Spring, the sweet Spring!*

—Thomas Nash

## TO A SKY-LARK

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

—William Wordsworth

# IV

# NEIGHBORS, NEAR AND OTHERWISE

*Something there is that doesn't love a wall,*
*That wants it down . . . . .*

—Frost

## OLD SUSAN

When Susan's work was done, she'd sit
With one fat guttering candle lit,
And window opened wide to win
The sweet night air to enter in;
There, with a thumb to keep her place
She'd read, with stern and wrinkled face.
Her mild eyes gliding very slow
Across the letters to and fro,
While wagged the guttering candle flame
In the wind that through the window came.
And sometimes in the silence she
Would mumble a sentence audibly,
Or shake her head as if to say,
"You silly souls, to act this way!"
And never a sound from night I'd hear,
Unless some far-off cock crowed clear;
Or her old shuffling thumb should turn
Another page; and rapt and stern,
Through her great glasses bent on me,
She'd glance into reality;
And shake her round old silvery head,
With—"You!—I thought you was in bed!"—
Only to tilt her book again,
And rooted in Romance remain.

—Walter de la Mare

## THE MASTER

(LINCOLN. Supposed to have been written not long after the Civil War.)

A flying word from here and there
Had sown the name at which we sneered,
But soon the name was everywhere,
To be reviled and then revered:
A presence to be loved and feared,
We cannot hide it, or deny
That we, the gentlemen who jeered,
May be forgotten by and by.

He came when days were perilous
And hearts of men were sore beguiled;
And having made his note of us,
He pondered and was reconciled.
Was ever master yet so mild
As he, and so untamable?
We doubted, even when he smiled,
Not knowing what he knew so well.

He knew that undeceiving fate
Would shame us whom he served unsought;
He knew that he must wince and wait—
The jest of those for whom he fought;
He knew devoutly what he thought
Of us and of our ridicule;
He knew that we must all be taught
Like little children in a school.

We gave a glamour to the task
That he encountered and saw through,
But little of us did he ask,
And little did we ever do.
And what appears if we review
The season when we railed and chaffed?
It is the face of one who knew
That we were learning while we laughed.

The face that in our vision feels
Again the venom that we flung,
Transfigured to the world reveals
The vigilance to which we clung.
Shrewd, hallowed, harassed, and among
The mysteries that are untold,
The face we see was never young,
Nor could it ever have been old.

For he, to whom we had applied
Our shopman's test of age and worth,
Was elemental when he died
As he was ancient at his birth:
The saddest among kings of earth,
Bowed with a galling crown, this man
Met rancor with a cryptic mirth,
Laconic—and Olympian.

The love, the grandeur, and the fame
Are bounded by the world alone;
The calm, the smouldering, and the flame
Of awful patience were his own:
With him they are forever flown
Past all our fond self-shadowings,
Wherewith we cumber the Unknown
As with inept, Icarian wings.

For we were not as other men:
'Twas ours to soar and his to see;
But we are coming down again,
And we shall come down pleasantly;
Nor shall we longer disagree
On what it is to be sublime,
But flourish in our perigee
And have one Titan at a time.

—Edwin Arlington Robinson

## TO MISTRESS MARGARET HUSSEY

Merry Margaret
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower:
With solace and gladness,
Much mirth and no madness,
All good and no badness;
So joyously,
So maidenly,
So womanly
Her demeaning
In every thing,
Far, far passing,
That I can indite,
Or suffice to write
Of Merry Margaret
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower.
As patient and still
And as full of good will
As fair Isaphill,
Coliander,
Sweet pomander,
Good Cassander;
Steadfast of thought,
Well made, well wrought,
Far may be sought,
Ere that ye can find
So courteous, so kind,
As merry Margaret,
This midsummer flower,
Gentle as Falcon
Or hawk of the tower.

—John Skelton

## ALL THE GIRLS ARE OUT

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
  Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
  Eyes bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
  Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,
  Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

Kerchief'd head and chin, she darts between her tulips,
  Streaming like a willow gray in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
  She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
  She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder,
  Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

. . . . . .

Front door and back of the moss'd old farmhouse
  Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadow'd orchard,
  Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
  Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
  Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white diary
  Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,
Cricketing below, rush'd brown and red with sunshine;
  O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!
Spying from the farm, herself she fetch'd a pitcher
  Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tiptoe,
  Said, 'I will kiss you': she laugh'd and lean'd her cheek.

—George Meredith, "Love in the Valley"

## MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss

Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

—Robert Browning

## WHEN THE YEAR GROWS OLD

I cannot but remember
  When the year grows old—
October—November—
  How she disliked the cold!

She used to watch the swallows
  Go down across the sky,
And turn from the window
  With a little sharp sigh.

And often when the brown leaves
  Were brittle on the ground,
And the wind in the chimney
  Made a melancholy sound.

She had a look about her
  That I wish I could forget—
The look of a scared thing
  Sitting in a net!

Oh, beautiful at nightfall
The soft spitting snow!
And beautiful the bare boughs
Rubbing to and fro!

But the roaring of the fire,
And the warmth of fur,
And the boiling of the kettle
Were beautiful to her!

I cannot but remember
When the year grows old—
October—November—
How she disliked the cold!

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

## UPON THE FOREST SIDE

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, often times,
When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.

—William Wordsworth, "Michael"

## THRUSHES

The City Financier
walks in the gardens,
stiffly, because of
his pride and his burdens.

The daisies, looking
up, observe
only a self-
respecting curve.

The thrushes only
see a flat
table-land
of shiny hat.

He looks importantly
about him,
while all the spring
goes on without him.

—Humbert Wolfe

## DRAKE'S DRUM

Drake he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),
Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Yarnder lumes the Island, yarnder lie the ships,
Wi' sailor lads a-dancin' heel-an'-toe,
An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide dashin'
He sees it arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

Drake he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,
(Capten art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe,
"Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the drum,
And dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin',
They shall find him, ware, an' wakin', as they found him long ago.

—Henry Newbolt

## ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known,—cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor'd of them all;—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch where through
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things: and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
  This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
  There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me,—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads,—you and I are old.
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all. But something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

## DAVID AND SAUL

. . . . He slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile
Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! . . . .

—Robert Browning, "Saul"

## THE CARPENTER'S SON

'Here the hangman stops his cart:
Now the best of friends must part.
Fare you well, for ill fare I:
Live, lads, and I will die.

'Oh, at home had I but stayed
'Prenticed to my father's trade,
Had I stuck to plane and adze,
I had not been lost, my lads.

'Then I might have built perhaps
Gallows-trees for other chaps,
Never dangled on my own,
Had I but left ill alone.

'Now, you see, they hang me high,
And the people passing by
Stop to shake their fists and curse;
So 'tis come from ill to worse.

'Here hang I, and right and left
Two poor fellows hang for theft:
And the same's the luck we prove,
Though the midmost hangs for love.

'Comrades all, that stand and gaze,
Walk henceforth in other ways;
See my neck and save your own:
Comrades all, leave ill alone.

'Make some day a decent end,
Shrewder fellows than your friend.
Fare you well, for ill fare I:
Live, lads, and I will die.'

—A. E. Housman

# V

# GHOSTS AND A VARIETY OF FANCIES

*A song of Enchantment I sang me there,*
*In a green-green wood, by waters fair.*

—De la Mare

## THE HAUNTER

He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
I, too, alertly go?—
Hover and hover a few feet from him
Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer the words he lifts me—
Only listen thereto!

When I could answer he did not say them:
When I could let him know
How I would like to join in his journeys
Seldom he wished to go.
Now that he goes and wants me with him
More than he used to do,
Never he sees my faithful phantom
Though he speaks thereto.

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him!
Quickly make him know
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.

Tell him a faithful one is doing
All that love can do
Still that his path may be worth pursuing,
And to bring peace thereto.

—THOMAS HARDY

## "AH, ARE YOU DIGGING ON MY GRAVE?"

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?"
—"No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.' "

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
—"Ah, no: they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.' "

"But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?"
—"Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

"Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say—since I have not guessed!"
—"O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?"

"Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!"

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

—THOMAS HARDY

## OVERHEARD ON A SALT MARSH

Nymph, nymph, what are your beads?
Green glass, goblin. Why do you stare at them?
Give them me.
No.
Give them me. Give them me.
No.
Then I will howl all night in the reeds,
Lie in the mud and howl for them.

Goblin, why do you love them so?

They are better than stars or water,
Better than voices of winds that sing,
Better than any man's fair daughter,
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.

Hush, I stole them out of the moon.

Give me your beads, I want them.
No.
I will lie and howl in a deep lagoon
For your green glass beads, I love them so.
Give them me. Give them.
No.

—HAROLD MONRO

## OBERON'S FEAST

Shapcot! to thee the fairy state
I with discretion dedicate;
Because thou prizest things that are
Curious and un-familiar.
Take first the feast; these dishes gone,
Wee'l see the fairy-court anon.

A little mushroome table spred,
After short prayers, they set on bread;
A moon-parcht grain of purest wheat,
With some small glit'ring gritt to eate
His choyce bitts with; then in a trice
They make a feast lesse great then nice.
But all this while his eye is serv'd,
We must not thinke his eare was sterv'd:
But that there was in place to stir
His spleen, the chirring grasshopper,
The merry cricket, puling flie,
The piping gnat for minstralcy.
And now we must imagine first,
The elves present, to quench his thirst,
A pure seed-pearle of infant dew,
Brought and besweetened in a blew
And pregnant violet; which done,
His kitling eyes begin to runne
Quite through the table, where he spies
The hornes of paperie butterflies:
Of which he eates and tastes a little
Of that we call the cuckoes spittle.
A little fuz-ball puding stands
By, yet not blessed by his hands,
That was too coorse; but then forthwith
He ventures boldly on the pith
Of sugred rush, and eates the sagge
And well bestrutted bees sweet bagge,
Gladding his pallat with some store
Of emits eggs; what wo'd he more?

But beards of mice, a newt's stew'd thigh,
A bloated earewig, and a flie;
With the red-capt worme, that's shut
Within the concave of a nut,
Browne as his tooth; a little moth,
Late fatned in a piece of cloth:
With withered cherries; mandrakes eares;
Moles eyes; to these, the slaine-stags teares,
The unctuous dewlaps of a snaile;
The broke-heart of a nightingale
Ore-come in musicke; with a wine,
Ne're ravisht from the flattering vine,
But gently prest from the soft side
Of the most sweet and dainty bride,
Brought in a dainty daizie, which
He fully quaffs up to bewitch
His blood to height; this done, commended
Grace by his priest, the feast is ended.

—Robert Herrick

## THE CHANGELING

Toll no bell for me, dear Father, dear Mother,
Waste no sighs;
There are my sisters, there is my little brother
Who plays in the place called Paradise,
Your children all, your children forever;
But I, so wild,
Your disgrace, with the queer brown face, was never,
Never, I know, but half your child!

In the garden at play, all day, last summer,
Far and away I heard
The sweet "tweet-tweet" of a strange new-comer,
The dearest, clearest call of a bird.
It lived down there in the deep green hollow,
My own old home, and the fairies say
The word of a bird is a thing to follow,
So I was away a night and a day.

One evening, too, by the nursery fire,
We snuggled close and sat round so still,
When suddenly as the wind blew higher,
Something scratched on the window-sill,
A pinched brown face peered in—I shivered;
No one listened or seemed to see;
The arms of it waved and the wings of it quivered,
Whoo— I knew it had come for me!
Some are as bad as bad can be!
All night long they danced in the rain,
Round and round in a dripping chain,
Threw their caps at the window-pane,
Tried to make me scream and shout
And fling the bedclothes all about:
I meant to stay in bed that night,
And if only you had left a light
They would never have got me out!

Sometimes I wouldn't speak, you see,
Or answer when you spoke to me,
Because in the long, still dusks of Spring
You can hear the whole world whispering;
The shy green grasses making love,
The feathers grow on the dear grey dove,
The tiny heart of the redstart beat,
The patter of the squirrel's feet,
The pebbles pushing in the silver streams,
The rushes talking in their dreams,
The swish-swish of the bat's black wings,
The wild-wood bluebell's sweet ting-tings,
Humming and hammering at your ear,
Everything there is to hear
In the heart of hidden things.
But not in the midst of the nursery riot,
That's why I wanted to be quiet,
Couldn't do my sums, or sing,
Or settle down to anything.
And when, for that, I was sent upstairs
I *did* kneel down to say my prayers;

But the King who sits on your high church steeple
Has nothing to do with us fairy people!

'Times I pleased you, dear Father, dear Mother,
Learned all my lessons and liked to play,
And dearly I loved the little pale brother
Whom some other bird must have called away.
Why did they bring me here to make me
Not quite bad and not quite good,
Why, unless They're wicked, do They want, in spite, to take me
Back to Their wet, wild wood?
Now, every night I shall see the windows shining,
The gold lamp's glow, and the fire's red gleam,
While the best of us are twining twigs and the rest of us are whining
In the hollow by the stream.
Black and chill are Their nights on the wold;
And They live so long and They feel no pain:
I shall grow up, but never grow old,
I shall always, always be very cold,
I shall never come back again!

—Charlotte Mew

## FAERY SONG

Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more—O weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes—O dry your eyes,
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies—
Shed no tear.

Overhead—look overhead
'Mong the blossoms white and red—
Look up, look up—I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough—
See me—'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill—

Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu—Adieu—I fly, adieu,
I vanish in the heaven's blue—
Adieu—Adieu!

—JOHN KEATS

## LOST LOVE

His eyes are quickened so with grief,
He can watch a grass or leaf
Every instant grow; he can
Clearly through a flint wall see,
Or watch the startled spirit flee
From the throat of a dead man:
Across two counties he can hear,
And catch your words before you speak,
The woodlouse, or the maggot's weak
Clamour rings in his sad ear;
And noise so slight it would surpass
Credence:—drinking sound of grass,
Worm-talk, clashing jaws of moth
Chumbling tiny holes in cloth:
The groan of ants who undertake
Gigantic loads for honour's sake,
Their sinews creak, their breath comes thin:
Whir of spiders when they spin,
And minute, whispering, mumbling, sighs
Of idle grubs and flies.
This man is quickened so with grief,
He wanders god-like or like thief
Inside and out, below, above,
Without relief seeking lost love.

—ROBERT GRAVES

## ALL THAT'S PAST

Very old are the woods;
And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
When March winds wake

So old with their beauty are—
  Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
  Roves back the rose.

Very old are the brooks;
  And the rills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
  The azure skies
Sing such a history
  Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
  As Solomon.

Very old are we men;
  Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
  By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile,
  But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
  Of amaranth lie.

—Walter de la Mare

## OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tells that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

## THINK, IN THIS BATTER'D CARAVANSERAI

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
  How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
  And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
  That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
  Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

. . . . . .

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
  The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows?

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
  To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

. . . . . .

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
  Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire!

—Edward Fitzgerald, "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayám"

## THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

They are all gone away,
The House is shut and still,
There is nothing more to say.

Through broken walls and gray
The winds blow bleak and shrill:
They are all gone away.

Nor is there one to-day
To speak them good or ill:
There is nothing more to say.

Why is it then we stray
Around that sunken sill?
They are all gone away.

And our poor fancy-play
For them is wasted skill:
There is nothing more to say.

There is ruin and decay
In the House on the Hill:
They are all gone away,
There is nothing more to say.

—Edwin Arlington Robinson

## CITY OF WIND

You ask, "Who is it that you kiss when you kiss that way?"
You ask, "Where have your lips flown now?" And I, dissembling,
Protest. And what would you say if I should say,
"To a city of wind, a city of towers trembling?"

I thought I should tell how I wooed you for her sake,
Since she would not listen. But how could you understand—
You to whom love is a voice, a footstep, a hand—
What do you know of love that is only an ache?

What do you know of love that is only a want
At night in the wind, when even the buildings blow
And cry in their joists, and people are blown aslant
With fences and trees and the dumb drift of snow?

How can you understand that whatever I thirst for
It is nothing but shadows I am seeking,
Remembering a city at dusk and the wind speaking,
Remembering it was a dream that I longed first for?

And would you believe it is to a city of wind blowing
My heart must go home at last, a lover and child,
To lose its pain in her heart wholly, knowing
It is a heart of wind, hollow and wild?

—George Dillon

## CLOWNS' HOUSES

Beneath the flat and paper sky
The sun, a demon's eye,
Glowed through the air, that mask of glass;
All wand'ring sounds that pass

Seemed out of tune, as if the light
Were fiddle-strings pulled tight.
The market square with spire and bell
Clanged out the hour in Hell.

The busy chatter of the heat
Shrilled like a parokeet;
And shuddering at the noonday light
The dust lay dead and white

As powder on a mummy's face,
Or fawned with simian grace
Round booths with many a hard bright toy
And wooden brittle joy:

The cap and bells of Time the Clown
That, jangling, whistled down
Young cherubs hidden in the guise
Of every bird that flies;

And star-bright masks for youth to wear,
Lest any dream that fare
—Bright pilgrim—past our ken, should see
Hints of Reality.

Upon the sharp-set grass, shrill-green,
Tall trees like rattles lean,
And jangle sharo and dizzily;
But when night falls they sigh

Till Pierrot moon steals slyly in,
His face more white than sin,
Black-masked, and with cool touch lays bare
Each cherry, plum, and pear.

Then underneath the veilèd eyes
Of houses, darkness lies,—
Tall house; like a hopeless prayer
They cleave the sly dumb air.

Blind are those houses, paper-thin;
Old shadows his therein,
With sly and crazy movements creep
Like marionettes, and weep.

Tall windows show Infinity;
And, hard reality,
The candles weep and pry and dance
Like lives mocked at by Chance

The rooms are vast as Sleep within:
When once I ventured in,
Chill Silence, like a surging sea,
Slowly enveloped me.

—Edith Sitwell

## 'TIS THE MIDDLE OF NIGHT BY THE CASTLE CLOCK

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
*Tu-whit!——————Tu-whoo!*
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesterday night
Of her own betrothéd knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,

And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair. . . . .

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Christabel"

## TARTARY

If I were Lord of Tartary,
  Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
  Of beaten gold my throne;
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
  Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
  Trumpeters every day
To every meal should summon me,
  And in my courtyard bray;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
  Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
  I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be—
  And clustered thick as seeds;
And ere should wane the morning-star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,
And zebras seven should draw my car
  Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
  Her rivers silver-pale!
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
  Glen, thicket, wood, and dale!
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
  In every purple vale!

—Walter de la Mare

## TOM O'BEDLAM

The moon's my constant mistress,
And the lovely owl my marrow;
The flaming drake,
And the night-crow, make
Me music to my sorrow.

I know more than Apollo;
For oft, where he lies sleeping,
I behold the stars
At mortal wars,
And the rounded welkin weeping.

The moon embraces her shepherd,
And the Queen of Love her warrior;
While the first does horn
The stars of morn,
And the next the heavenly farrier.

With a heart of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander:
With a burning spear,
And a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander;

With a Knight of ghosts and shadows,
I summoned am to Tourney:
Ten leagues beyond
The wide world's end;
Methinks it is no journey.

—Anonymous (Elizabethan)

# VI

## THE MYRIAD WAYS OF LIFE

*We are such stuff*
*As dreams are made on, and our little life*
*Is rounded with a sleep.*

—SHAKESPEARE

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### IT IS NOT GROWING LIKE A TREE

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long a oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far, in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

—BEN JONSON

### MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.

And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness, as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

—Robert Frost

## SWEET CONTENT

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O, sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed?
O, punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed
To add to golden numbers golden numbers?
O, sweet content! O, sweet, O, sweet content!

Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny, hey nonny, nonny!

Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring?
O, sweet content!
Swimm'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
O, punishment!
Then he that patiently want's burden bears,
No burden bears, but is a king, a king!
O, sweet content! O, sweet, O, sweet content!

Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny, hey nonny, nonny!

—Thomas Dekker

## IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NATIONS"

I

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass:
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by;
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die.

—Thomas Hardy

## A NOISELESS, PATIENT SPIDER

A noiseless, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;
Mark' how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd—till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my Soul.

—Walt Whitman

## STARS WHEEL IN PURPLE

Stars wheel in purple, yours is not so rare
as Hesperus, nor yet so great a star
as bright Aldebaran or Sirius,
nor yet the stained and brilliant one of War;

stars turn in purple, glorious to the sight;
yours is not gracious as the Pleiads are,
nor as Orion's sapphires, luminous;

yet disenchanted, cold, imperious face,
when all the others, blighted, reel and fall,
your star, steel-set, keeps lone and frigid tryst
to freighted ships baffled in wind and blast.

—"H. D.," "Let Zeus Record"

## AND SATAN STAYED NOT TO REPLY

. . . . and Satan stayed not to reply,
But, glad that now his sea should find a shore,
With fresh alacrity and force renewed
Springs upward, like a pyramid of fire,

Into the wild expanse, and through the shock
Of fighting elements, on all sides round
Environed, wins his way; harder beset
And more endangered than when Argo passed
Through Bosporus betwixt the justling rocks;
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunned
Charybdis, and by the other whirlpool steered:
So he with difficulty and labour hard
Moved on: with difficulty and labour he;

. . . . . .

But now at last the sacred influence
Of light appears, and from the walls of Heaven
Shoots far into the bosom of dim Night
A glimmering dawn. Here Nature first begins
Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire,
As from her outmost works, a broken foe,
With tumult less and with less hostile din;
That Satan with less toil, and now with ease,
Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light,
And, like a weather-beaten vessel, holds
Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn;
Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold
Far off the empyreal Heaven, extended wide
In circuit, undetermined square or round,
With opal towers and battlements adorned
Of living sapphire, once his native seat;
And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain,
This pendent World, in bigness as a star
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon,
Thither, full fraught with mischievous revenge,
Accursed, and in a curséd hour, he hies.

—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book II

## LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

On a starr'd night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screen'd,
Where sinners hugg'd their spectre of repose.

Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he lean'd,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadow'd Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that prick'd his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reach'd a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he look'd, and sank.
Around the ancient track march'd, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

—George Meredith

## I SAW ETERNITY THE OTHER NIGHT

I saw Eternity, the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright;
And round beneath it Time in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved; in which the world
And all her train were hurled.

—Henry Vaughan, "The World"

## THE ONE REMAINS

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

. . . . . .

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove

By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the rembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Adonais"

## PEACE

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a wingèd sentry
All skilful in the wars:
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crown'd with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious Friend,
And—O my soul, awake!—
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.
Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes—
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

—Henry Vaughan

## JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY!

Joy, shipmate, joy!
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmate, joy!

—Walt Whitman

# PART III
# PUZZLES

Everyone who attempts to interest students in poetry meets certain questions which must inevitably arise when young people grapple for the first time with problems in the aesthetic theory underlying poetic art. First of all, some sort of discrimination must be made between poetry and prose. Then there is the uneasiness and hesitation students feel in enjoying poetry which "doesn't mean anything"—a phrase, which, as a careful questioning usually reveals, turns out to refer to Keats's "Ode to Autumn" or Shakespeare's "When Icicles Hang by the Wall," or any other verse in which the poetical elements do not happen to be tied up with the explicit moral teaching deemed to constitute the only adequate reason for poetry in the early school days of almost all of us. Another objector to the "poetical" is the person who insists that dominant intellectual meanings are the only factors in a poem worth serious discussion. Along with concern about these very difficult questions, come uncertainties as to what we are justified in considering "good" poetry. How are we to judge a poem as "good" or "bad"? And, finally, what *is* poetry? If we believe it presents a worth-while point of view or helps in solving difficulties met with by everybody, then we must try to evaluate it—to show that a keen interest in, and increasing sympathy with, the work of poets is definitely a gain to the individual.

In general, the remarks on these topics are the result of actual class discussions. All attempts, then, to cope with these puzzles grow out of expressions of student opinion.

# CHAPTER I

## POETRY AND PROSE

The following three pieces were given a class, without any indication of authorship. The students were asked to discuss them in the light of their knowledge of poetical elements—that is, of the imagery, rhythm, and sound patterns—with no comment from the instructor.

### I. THE POPLAR

Poplar (Latin *Populus*), the name of a small group of catkin-bearing trees belonging to the order *Salicaceae*. The leaves are broader than in most willows, and are generally either deltoid or ovate in shape, often flattened. Many of the species attain a large size, and all are of very rapid growth. The poplars are almost entirely confined to the north temperate zone, but a few approach or even pass its northern limit, and they are widely distributed within that area; they show, like willows, a partiality for moist ground and often line the river-sides in otherwise treeless districts.[1]

### II. THE POPLAR

There is a great tree in Sussex, whose cloud of thin foliage floats high in the summer air. The thrush sings in it, and the blackbirds, who fill the late, decorative sunshine with a shimmer of golden sound. There the nightingale finds her green cloister; and on those branches sometimes, like a great fruit, hangs the lemon-coloured Moon. In the glare of August, when all the world is faint with

[1] *New International Encyclopedia* (adapted).

heat, there is always a breeze in those cool recesses, always a noise, like the noise of water, among its lightly hung leaves.

But the owner of this Tree lives in London, reading books.[1]

## III. THE TREE

This is the living thing that cannot stir.
Where the seed chances there it roots and grows,
To suck what makes the lily or the fir
Out of the earth and from the air that blows,
Great power of will that little thing the seed
Has, all alone in earth, to plan the tree,
And, though the mud oppresses, to succeed
And put out branches where the birds may be.[2]

The following comments are adapted from the work of five students.[3]

It is clear that II and III are more alike than I and II or than I and III. Just what are the reasons for this?

In form both I and II are prose; that is, the material is contained in paragraphs, in conventional sentences, each dealing with the same topic: the Poplar. Beyond this similarity of content they are totally different. II is rich in imagery: I tells the facts and leaves the reader to make what use of them he will. "Cloud of thin foliage floats high." This gives an impression of a leafy mass entirely different from such a statement as "the leaves are broader than in most willows." . . . . We find life suggested in II. The birds are singing. "Green cloisters" is an appropriate description of the deep coolness of a branch close to the trunk with the leaves arched around it. There is sound in II: birds singing, breeze making a noise like water. There is none in I.

[1] Logan Pearsall Smith, from *Trivia* (1926), p. 142.

[2] John Masefield, from "Sonnet XLVI."

[3] Vivian Wasser, Margaret Dean, Mrs. Leah Clawson, Lester Freudenthal, Harvey Greenleaf.

I is pure prose because it gives only information in its simplest form, stripped of anything that would not fit every poplar in existence. II is of a poetical nature because it represents a poplar to the reader's experience through sense-appeals; this happens to be one specific poplar at three different times; in the summer sunshine; in the moonlight; in the glare of August. But II has still other poetical elements; that is, the author has thought of the sounds of words as well as of their content. The letter *l* runs through, rising to a delicate staccato in the final alliteration: "lightly hung leaves." One feels a definite patterning of the letters *s* and *z*. The strong contrast of the last sentence,

"But the owner of this Tree lives in London, reading books,"

emphasizes unmistakably the motivation of the imagery. There is a subtle focus on this contrast by the use of the capital T. The echo of the alliteration of *l* in "*l*ives in *L*ondon," not only ties the sound effects together, but calls attention to the owner's folly in taking life at second or third hand through other eyes, when he might get it directly through the use of his own senses.

III is indisputably poetry because it makes use of very nearly all the "poetic" devices: rhyme, regularized rhythm, and skillful, intentional imagery. There is sound pattern in addition to rhyme, also, as in the alliteration of *b* in the eighth, ninth, and tenth lines. Of course both imagery and sound pattern were clearly and definitely motived in II. Rhyme and metrical regularity are added to these elements in III. But there is a deeper poetic feeling, also, in III: that is, the poet has considered not only the appearance of the tree and its beauty, as in II, but he has gone a step farther, and felt the "spirit" of the tree. He was not only looking at a glorious sight, not only hearing the life in it, but he *was* the tree; he understood its will and the forces which made it.

"This is the living thing that cannot stir . . . . ,"

This is more than a statement. Frost is feeling the same thing in his poem "The Sound of Trees," when he says

"My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway. . . . ."

The following summary[1] may be useful in making clear the essential differences in the three pieces.

I. "*Pure*" *prose:* informative. Refuses all emotional associations. Appeals solely to the intellect.

II. "*Poetic*" *prose:* imaginative. Employs all means except regularized rhythm and rhyme to stir emotional experience.

III. "*Pure*" *poetry:* imaginative: Words used at their fullest value. Complete sympathy with the subject gained through emotional participation in the essential nature of its character.

This exercise deliberately isolates three types of writing, chosen to show as simply as possible the essential differences between "poetic" qualities and "prosaic" qualities. The three have been selected to show that, ordinarily speaking, there can be no hard and fast line drawn between prose on the one hand, and poetry on the other. The difference is one of degree of the use of imaginative elements, resting, primarily, on the purpose of the writer. Masson, in his essay *Prose and Verse*, explains this clearly: "Prose and verse are presented as two circles or spheres, not entirely separate, as some would make them, but intersecting and interpenetrating through a large portion of both their bulks, and disconnected only in two crescents outstanding at the right and left."[2]

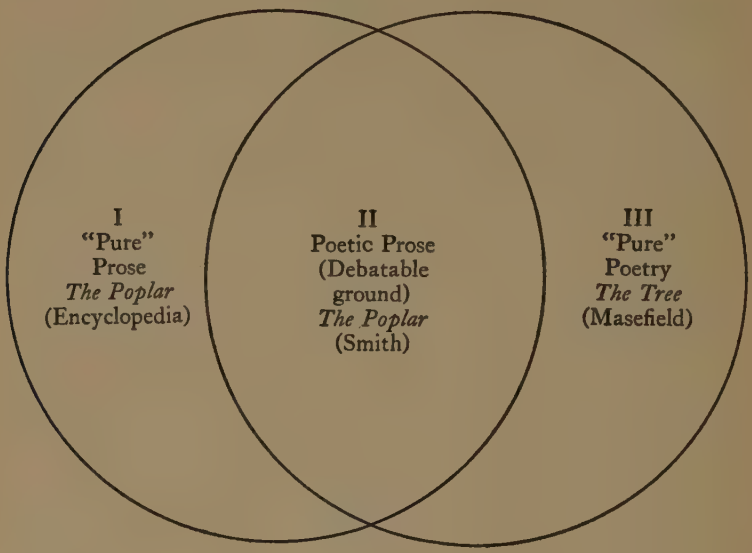
It is interesting to apply this definition to our three specimens. In Figure 10 if the left-hand circle is allowed to

[1] Beatrice Roberg.

[2] *Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Other Essays* (ed. 1875), pp. 289–90.

stand for Prose and the right-hand for Poetry, we find we may place each one of the three pieces with comparative ease:

Fig. 10



## CHAPTER II

## "GOOD" POETRY—THE PROBLEM OF TASTE

A class of thirty members, which had been discussing the nature of poetry for a month, was one morning confronted with the two following poems, and with no preliminary remarks from the instructor, was asked to write as fully as possible on each. Another class of the same size, which had never studied poetry, wrote on the same day on the same poems. We shall quote the results at some length.

### I

### THE OPTIMIST

I sing a song to the Optimist
  To the man that is brave and strong,
Who keeps his head when things go right,
  And smiles when things go wrong.

I am proud of the genial Optimist
  His radiant voice and speech;
He helps to smooth the rugged path
  Of all within his reach.

I like the way of the Optimist,
  Who looks for the bright and best;
He scatters sunshine as he goes
  And leaves his fellows blest.

I am glad to meet the Optimist
  With his message of good cheer;
He carries hope and confidence
  To those assailed by fear.

So here's a song to the Optimist,
  Who laughs and works and sings,
And daily shows this weary world
  The way to better things.

II

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
  Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
  For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
  I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
  My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
  Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
  Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
  How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
  I am the captain of my soul.

It turned out that in each group about the same number preferred "The Optimist" to "Invictus." This was half the class. But there was an encouraging feature, nevertheless. Those who objected to "The Optimist" among the students of poetry had very definite reasons for condemning it. The unfavorable comments from the class which had never considered the nature of poetry were not based on any such sound evidences of intelligent criticism. We may claim, then, that we may at least give students the essential grounds from which to develop "taste."

The following are typical discussions from both sets of students:

"THE OPTIMIST" (CHOSEN AS THE BETTER)

A. From the class which had not studied poetry:

No. I ["The Optimist"] is the positive aspect of any situation. It looks on the bright side of life. It also shows general well being. It is constructive.

"Who keeps his head when things go right,
And smiles when things go wrong."

No. II ["Invictus"] is not really the "Pessimist," but it looks at the situation from the pessimists's view.

"Black night"
"Fell clutch of circumstance"
"Beyond this place of wrath and tears"
"Looms but the Horror of the shade"

Nothing constructive. Tends toward gloom.

B. From the students of poetry:

No. I is real poetry. My hair-dresser keeps little cheery pieces like this under the glass-top of her dressing-table, and she has to get more all the time because people love them so much that they disappear every day. There is enough that is drab and dreary in this great world of ours not to be reminded of the morbid thoughts in "Invictus." I can see why some people would call No. II better poetry, but I don't like it.

"THE OPTIMIST" (REJECTED AS BAD)

A. From the class which had not studied poetry:

The first poem tries to disregard the fact that there are adversities in life. If this philosophy of optimism is followed, one will not be prepared for disappointments which are bound to happen. The second poem admits the presence of a not-too-smooth pathway of life, and is not confused or in despair because of its difficulties. In a way, I think No. II describes an optimist just as No. I does, but of a different type.

B. From the students of poetry:

I cannot say that it gives me a pleasant effect. The imagery is faulty. There are not any real "live" images, although we do have some reactions due to phrases like "weary world" and "scatters sunshine," because of the many, many times they have been used. I used to think these always marked "poetry." . . . . Besides his use of very general and trite phrases, the poet is inconsistent:

> "He helps to smooth the rugged path,
> Of all within his reach."

We visualize his reaching to people around him—but what does he do with them? Smooths the rugged path before them. Taken mentally or physically, such an act would be an impossibility. There is no connection between a "reach" and a "smoothing." . . . . All of the cases of alliteration are due to worn-out phrases such as "weary world." . . . . I can find no conscious, careful use of sound, nor vivid use of rhythm. . . . .

In summary: the poet took no pains to get imagistic effects, nor effects in rhythm or tone quality. He is not pleasantly original, nor has he used unoriginal ideas thoughtfully nor with interesting feeling.

"Invictus" may not be pleasing to some people. Personally, I like men and women who are so brave that they don't have to say anything about it. But at least the man who wrote it *feels* and is able to convey feeling to us. I can and do enjoy the way his images and his fine sound-patterns build up his feeling. These features, I am sure, make me feel his piece as a *poem*.[1]

As we have intimated before, there is no use blinking the fact that, no matter how many "courses" are given in the appreciation of poetry, a certain percentage of people will always prefer verse like "The Optimist," obtain real pleasure from it and often a kind of consolation of which it would be cruel to deprive them. What is to be done? And here, lies the greatest problem confronting those who are

[1] Frances Taylor (adapted).

undertaking to make poetic art really mean something in the individual's life.

In the first place, we can very easily overwhelm the lover of "The Optimist" with ridicule, and thus silence him (or her) forever when "art" is discussed. He will be sure, in his own mind, that he really does like "The Optimist," in spite of everything that is said about it. Evidently there is something else in the world that is "art," quite outside his experience and not for him.

The difficulty with the use of ridicule is, that while it may shock some students into strong resentment, and, from that emotional stimulus, into careful attention to what they read, with the result of developing their experience of poetry and thus their understanding, it is, after all, an unintelligent and clumsy approach.

In the second place, we may allow ourselves to sink to the point of view of the admirer of "The Optimist," who says: "If it is poetry to me, then it must be poetry. Anything that gives pleasure through rhythmical language is poetry. This must be true, for Coleridge has said: 'The proper and immediate object of Poetry is the communication of pleasure.' "

If we rest here, we have been false to our function as teachers of poetry in two ways: we have asserted something which is not; that is, we have said that "The Optimist" is poetry; and we have failed to show why it is not, and thus placed an obstacle in the way of the student's growth in power to make poetry a vital part of his experience.

It is very hazardous to suggest any certain means of instilling poetic appreciation in every student in every class

But a few fundamental attitudes may be taken which will do no harm under any circumstances and which will not present an obstacle to anyone's desire to be able to read poetry with understanding and sympathy. Some way or other the student must be made sure that his honest expression of likes and dislikes will be respected. Both admirers of "The Optimist," whose statements have been quoted, present by those very statements starting-points for class discussion in which their ideas, while taken with the same serious consideration that is given to every expression of honest opinion, are shown, not necessarily by the instructor, to be inevitably a distorting of reality; of the *truth*, that is, from which great art—the art which we may call "fine"—must spring. The student is very rare, indeed, who cannot understand that the very fact of living—the experience of meeting situations day after day—is the basis of an accumulation of a certain stock of wisdom in all of us. They understand, too, that all of us hope and dream of a radiant future for ourselves, and, as we become absorbed in family, or business, or profession, for the persons or the interests to whom our lives are devoted. Now our class discussions may show that while these hopes and dreams are the most precious part of life to most of us, the wisdom of practical living must be taken into account at every turn. All fine art must necessarily grow out of a keen, clear-sighted perception of the basic facts of the lives of human beings in their environment. Your lover of "The Optimist" usually knows these basic facts as well as anyone else. He has a deep aversion to considering them. And "art," to his mind, should put him in a world of dreams in which they are all forgotten. "There

is so much sorrow and suffering around us every day that I don't wish to be reminded of it when I go to the theater or read poetry."

This is an understandable position. But it is not a constructive one. People who expect only rest and relaxation from art are rejecting one of the most powerful aids to a fuller and freer life which life itself has to offer. Great artists are those whose "accumulated stock of wisdom" has reached a height which makes their experience of incalculable value to us, when we learn to understand their language. Of course this takes time and patience. How can we expect all students, in six weeks, or sixty, to reject the old attitude of delight in unreality and day-dreams, and to rejoice in a point of view, which, based on "common sense," seems to them harsh, cold-blooded, and even cruel?

Fortunately, these persons who resolutely shut their eyes to experience and whose fear of encountering ugliness and pain keeps them in a pretty rosy world of their own construction, seem to be growing less numerous. Modern life, though it may be mean and sordid in many ways, is at least successful in making their existence more and more impossible. But, if they are really becoming fewer, how can we explain the fact that half of each of our classes preferred "The Optimist"? There seems to be a bad misunderstanding of reality here.

Not at all! The explanation includes the only answer we are able to give to this particular puzzle: "The Problem of Taste." Of our class of thirty, only three or four are confirmed, determined wearers of rose-colored glasses. The others are persons who have never thought about art at all. When they suddenly discover that poetry—any art,

for that matter—grows out of a keen understanding of universal human difficulties, and deals with these difficulties in the highest spirit of which the human being is capable, they see a real reason for its existence and a real reason for knowing it. Then they find themselves on the road to a sound basis for making art an element in their lives. The teacher's reason for existence, of course, is to help this discovery in students who never have understood the real function of art, and who welcome it with all their hearts when its vital connection with everyday life is suddenly revealed to them.

All of us who have watched this discovery grow in the eyes of students know from what singularly unpromising beginnings it may spring. A fine artist once said, answering Henry James' amused query as to how she began her peregrination from Main Street to the Paris salon: "How did I get my start? By painting white water-lilies on black velvet."

The artist's difficulty, in this case, had been the difficulty of limited environment. Like most of the students who preferred "The Optimist," she took it for granted that, just as rhyming, rhythmical words about an emotional subject meant "poetry" to them, white water-lilies on black velvet meant "art" to her. But wider experience brought fuller and more penetrating knowledge of the function of the artist—of the things he is able to do—the limitless field of human experience and aspiration which he can explore, and from which he can isolate and make permanent certain things he has seen and felt which, *as* he sees and feels them, become valuable to us because of his observation.

Our student of poetry discovers that he can join the poet in his explorations—in the results of his explorations, at least. But the teacher, as an individual, must remain part of the background. His duties are four: to give the student tools, that is, the necessary facts about the nature of poetry; to insist with austerity that the student *know* what the poet has said, that is, that a thorough and intimate understanding of the text is the only adequate basis for opinions about the poem; to introduce him to as wide and varied a field of poetic art as possible; and to refrain from statements of personal preference and opinion which will hamper and sometimes destroy that purely independent growth of individual response to certain poems which the student must recognize freshly and independently as valuable for *him*, for that "self-identity" which Whitehead calls the "life of the spirit." The teacher may encourage him in many ways—for instance, by assuring him that it is not important if many poems judged "great" stir no response in him at once. Since he has not lived through the English Civil War, he cannot expect himself to feel as Milton felt in some of his sonnets. But—the teacher must be sure that the student knows *what* he does not feel and *why* he does not feel it. He must know, also, that if he builds up a living knowledge of the English Civil War, the chances are that Milton's sonnets will be felt by him as great art. Then if he becomes a specialist in literature as a reflection of history or philosophy, he will, on the basis of his actual experience of the sonnets as great art, be able to study them and understand their place in human development from the point of view, not of the intellectualist who is satisfied with the limits of his

particular field of interest, but with the luminous imagination and all-embracing sympathies of the great scholar.

But we are a long way from the half of our class who indicated a preference for "The Optimist." We said that only three or four of them were incurable; that the others, who superficially preferred the bad poem because it "looked" like poetry on the page and because it said pleasant things they had been taught to think of as poetry, would welcome fine poetry (that is, poetry based on actual knowledge of life and developed with all the poet's resources), when they were introduced to it, and if they had learned to understand its language. Is there any way of testing this assertion?

This question is undoubtedly more difficult to answer satisfactorily than any of the others so far. As in the others our only basis for discussion can be the results of classroom experience.

The class in the study of poetry, accordingly, quite without warning, were confronted about a month after "The Optimist" and "Invictus" discussion, with the two following poems. As in every other case, the names of the authors, and any comment whatever, were carefully avoided.

I

My days among the dead are past;
  Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
  The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,
  And seek relief in woe;

And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the dead; with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and tears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the dead, anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.[1]

II

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble,
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
When Uricon the city stood:
'Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

[1] Robert Southey.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
To-day the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.[1]

The class was restricted sharply to a discussion of poetic elements with, preferably, analyses by means of charts and diagrams to prove their assertions. On the basis of this evidence, each student was asked to sum up his opinion of the relative merit of the two pieces.

Of the thirty, one preferred No. I: "Easy to understand and has a good moral. No. II irritates me because I don't know what it is talking about. Perhaps if I had time to study it I could understand it and like it"; ten were uncertain, with no clear-cut notion of why No. II was superior. A typical paper from among the nineteen follows:

So far as poetry is concerned, I think the four verses of No. I are a flop. The imagery is ridiculous. There is no pleasure in reading stuff like this for I get no emotional appeal and the imagination has little work to do. . . . . The whole content of the verses is right before your eyes and you don't even have to think about it. No. II was written by a much better poet. The second and third readings make one realize the power of the imagery and the sound patterns. The first stanza starts off with a striking kinaesthetic image, and we hold to that in some form or other straight through the poem. In the last stanza it comes again in the same form as in the first, so that the effect is very unified. There is no such use of imagery in No. I.[2]

Other students showed the delicate use of sound in No. II and the cheap, trite sound effects of No. I. Other summaries, based on these technical observations, seemed to indicate the beginnings of an actual growth of taste:

In No. I the principal thought is one that is subordinated in No. II; the feeling of relationship between the living and the

[1] A. E. Housman. [2] Charles A. Weaver.

dead. Four stanzas elaborate on this relationship: the gratitude of the man living, the instruction he gained from them, and his assurance he will join them "for all futurity." The poet of the second poem does not feel the dead have given him anything; his retrospective mood merely explains his philosophy. But he shows his sympathy for, and his feeling of relationship with, the "Roman" in the lines

> "The blood that warms an English yeoman,
> The thoughts that hurt him, they were there."

The underlying thought in this poem is that life is continuous, though forests and nations change. To my mind there is no comparison between the two poems. The image-charts, the diagrams of sound qualities, show finely poetic effects in the second which are lacking in the first. Then, too, the second has truth in it, truth that you keep on thinking about.[1]

This particular study, then, seems to indicate that nineteen students out of thirty possess a thoughtful and appreciative attitude toward poetic art, and have acquired some basis for discrimination when confronted with various types. These people, it is safe to say, have gained an interest in poetry which bids fair to be permanent; which will, unless the individual chooses otherwise, inevitably become a source of helpfulness in a richer and more significant development of their growth as finely adjusted human beings.

But can we really make this claim for poetry? Whitehead has said, in the chapter from which we have quoted so many times, that "habits of aesthetic apprehension" are the necessary correctives in this overintellectualized period. "When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the

[1] John Vincent Healy, Vivian Wasser, Mrs. Leah Clawson.

earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset."[1] Is it actually true that a developed ability to read poetry will aid in the "fertilisation of the soul" which Whitehead considers the reason for the necessity of art?

To answer this we must try to decide what it is we may all agree to call "poetry"; and then, on the basis of that agreement, we may try to evaluate it as an element of permanent value in the development of the individual.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 286.

## CHAPTER III

## WHAT IS POETRY?

In the first part of this book we tried to show various facts about what we may call the "physical characteristics" of poetry: the essential qualities as they may exist in imagery, rhythm, sound patterns. In the third part we have attempted to show a few things that poetry is not: that it is not prose; that it is not, in its essence, moralistic or intellectualistic; that, in its finest forms, it does not spring from a refusal to face experience or from a sentimentalization, that is, a falsifying, of reality.

But neither of these attempts get at the root of the question: What is Poetry?

Many persons have tried to answer this. Perhaps the most interesting definitions of all come from the poets themselves. Ernest Rhys has collected many of these, ranging from the time of Chaucer to our own day, in his *Prelude to Poetry*, one of the most useful books a student of poetic art can own. Shelley, for example, whose essay, *A Defense of Poetry*, is printed in the volume, describes poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." He goes on to say,

> We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression . . . . and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire.[1]

[1] *Prelude to Poetry* (Everyman ed.), p. 236.

ear poetry actually catches the moods of these intangible moments and makes them permanent, it is a powerful aid toward making the habits of a fine personality permanent.

But this is a poet's description of the "spirit life" of men and women. As we have seen, poets are not respected authorities nowadays. But scientists are beginning to feel that the emotional life of the individual must not be hampered in its development. Even so long ago as the middle of the nineteenth century Darwin, in discussing a diminishing power to read poetry and hear music, wrote, "The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness; and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." Overstreet, in his book, *About Ourselves, Psychology for Normal People* (1927), quotes this at the beginning of his chapters discussing the necessity of music, pictorial art, and poetry, in building up an "expansive personality," that is, one that "not only urges the individual toward others, but which so relates him to those others, in the spirit of his age, that they and he bring to birth what neither could create in isolation."[1] This, Overstreet thinks, is the "intercreating mind," the supreme type of personality. All art is necessary in liberating us from concern with our own selves and revealing to us universalities of experience. Shelley's "evanescent visitations . . . . elevating and delightful . . . . producing a state of mind at war with every base desire" is a poet's way of describing the fact noted by the modern psychologist: "Poetry is dream . . . . a sense of something wanted, something

[1] P. 286

fine, something that puts glamour into the commonplace. . . . ."

Who is without these intangible aspirations and sudden visions of a life larger than his own self-identity? Music gives expression to these without the medium of verbal concepts; pictorial art does the same thing by means of color and form. Poetry works the magic by means of words. "Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said," explains Edwin Arlington Robinson, one of the keenest of modern poets.

This is what the Australian blackfellow managed to do in his exultant chant after the kangaroo hunt. But there is a deeper human significance in the following piece translated by Mary Austin from the Papago Indian:

LOVE-SONG

Early I rose
In the blue morning;
My love was before me,
It came running up to me from the
doorways of the Dawn.

On Papago Mountain
The dying quarry
Looked at me with my love's eyes.

The singer here felt love as an intangible presence. Or consider Mrs. Austin's translation of the lament of a Paiute father for his son:

Son, my son!
I will go up to the mountain
And there I will light a fire

To the feet of my son's spirit,
And there will I lament him;
Saying,
Oh my son,
What is my life to me, now you are departed?

Son, my son,
In the deep earth
We softly laid thee
In a chief's robe,
In a warrior's gear.
Surely there,
In the spirit land
Thy deeds attend thee!
Surely,
The corn comes to the ear again!
But, I here,
I am the stalk that the seed-gatherers
Descrying empty, afar, left standing,
Son, my son!
What is my life to me now you are departed?

There is, in these two pieces from the Papago and the Paiute, more than the physical delight in action and the satisfaction of hunger which is the "evanescent visitation" so triumphantly crystallized into words by the blackfellow. The Papago who saw his love in the eyes of the dying deer forgot, while he was enthralled with his song all "false desires" because, literally, there was no room for them in his mind. The father's love for his son, following him into the strange regions of death, and conscious of the terrible desolation in which he the living one is left, takes form in words which manage "to tell us what cannot be said." Now that you are gone, says the Paiute father, I see myself as a

. . . . stalk that the seed-gatherers
Descrying empty, afar, left standing.

These are very primitive examples. The worlds of the blackfellow, the Papago, and the Paiute are comparatively simple. The poet, as mankind develops, has a continually more complex environment with which to deal. He must apprehend this with every power at his command; with the exquisite sensitiveness of one keenly aware of the physical world of the five senses; with the finely adjusted intellectual activity which is the great gift of modern scientific training; with the power to place in their proper values all these elements of his existence—a power to apprehend "concrete fact with a high light thrown on what is relevant to its preciousness."

The poet's keen and true evaluation of the facts of human life and the power of transferring his evaluation to us by means of words used at their highest potential energy is poetry. It deals with every phase of existence: nothing is too high, nothing too low. It pierces to the heart of the matter and reveals to us its essence in words which inextricably entangle our own experiences with the poet's vision and which make that vision an actual reality.

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

P9-DVU-277